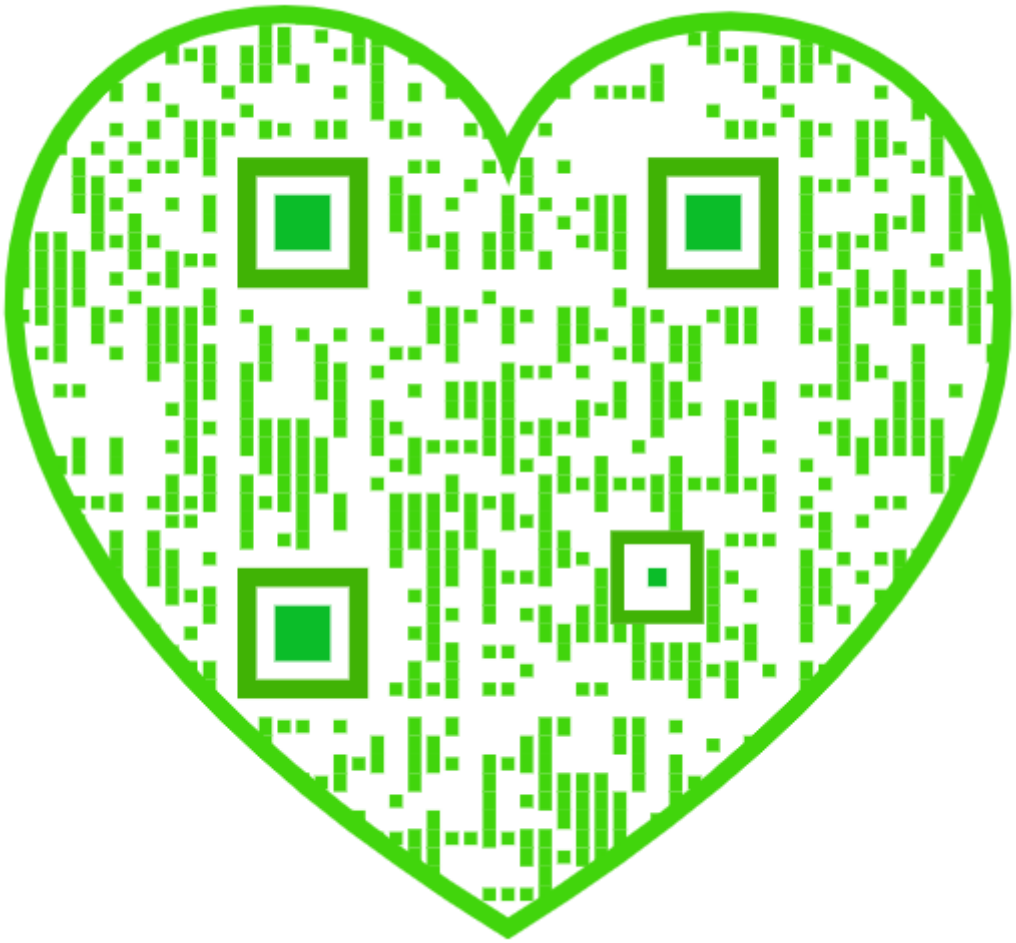

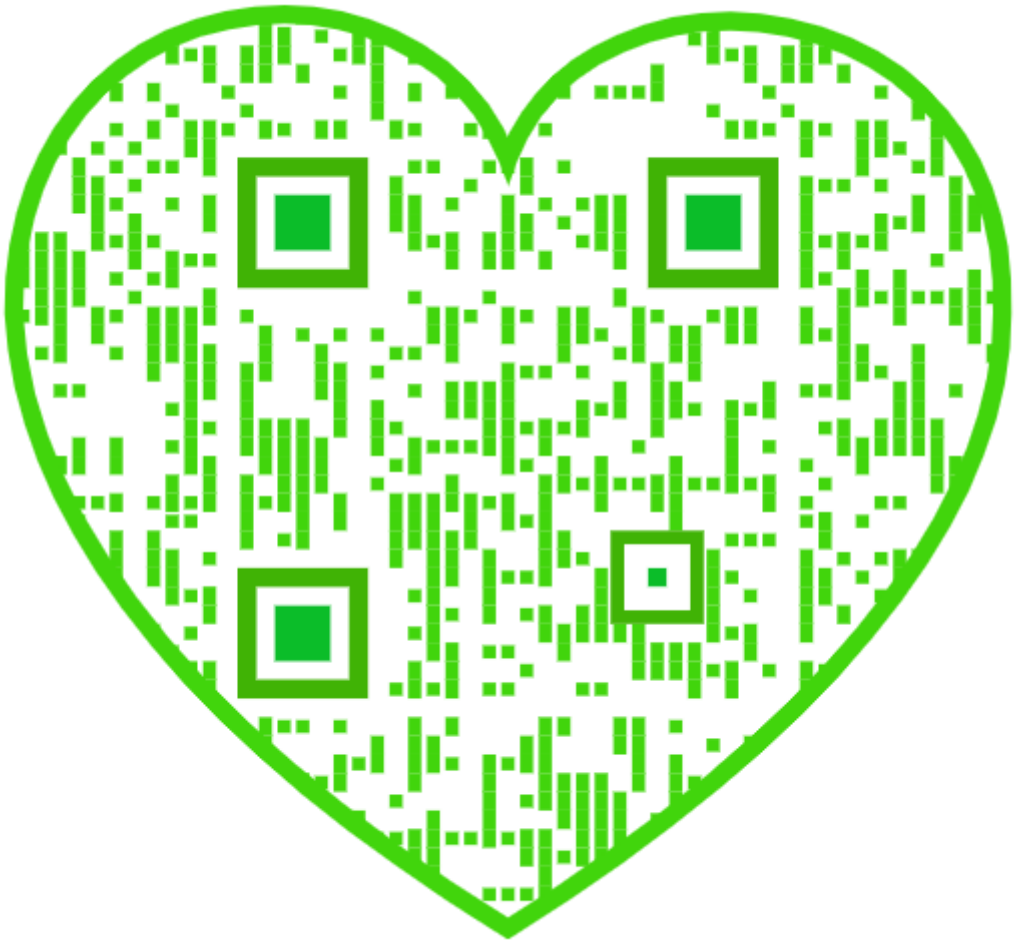

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# RURAL HANDICRAFTS IN THE UNITED STATES

ALLEN EATON
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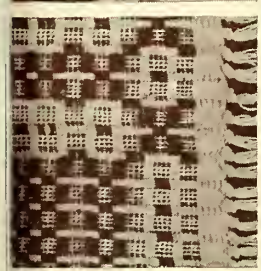
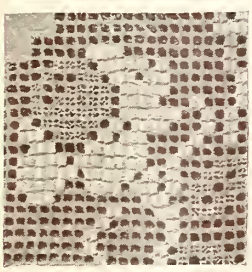

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
IN COOPERATION WITH RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION
Miscellaneous Publication No. 610

FLOWER STUDY, SEEDS FROM THE OZARKS

This painting in seeds was done by a rural woman in Arkansas who uses sandpaper for a background and glues the seeds firmly, sometimes shellacking them. Her color combinations are unusually attractive, and she always employs natural-colored seeds. Nineteen varieties were used. The frame is made of sycamore.

# RURAL HANDICRAFTS IN THE UNITED STATES

By ALLEN EATON

*Director, Department of Arts and Social Work*
*Russell Sage Foundation*

and LUCINDA CRILE

*Extension Analyst*
*Division of Field Studies and Training*
*Extension Service*

with an introduction by

M. L. WILSON

*Director of Extension Work*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
IN COOPERATION WITH RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION
Miscellaneous Publication No. 610, Issued November 1946

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FARM AND HOME HANDICRAFTS IN NEW ENGLAND

In the rural sections of New England, and in fishing villages, many things are made by hand. The articles illustrated were shown in the Exhibition of Contemporary New England Handicrafts at Worcester, Mass., in 1943: Rake of ash (Vermont), flail, yoke, gambrel (Massachusetts), broom of birch twigs and broom of witch-hazel shavings (Massachusetts), copper measures, rag carpet, homespun yarn, white ash basket at right, pine-root basket at left, and butter stamp on floor (Vermont), cider jug and other pottery (New Hampshire), wooden implements (Connecticut).

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"BROKEN STAR" PATCHWORK QUILT. MASSACHUSETTS

Quilt making has probably been the most widely practiced of the folk arts in our country, beginning in colonial days and continuing now in every State of the Union. No other country has developed such a wealth of quilt designs as has the United States. This quilt, made in Massachusetts, was shown at the Exhibition of Contemporary New England Handicrafts, Worcester, in 1943.

# RURAL HANDICRAFTS IN THE UNITED STATES

## INTRODUCTION

### *Handicrafts and the Creative Arts*

In recent years handicrafts and the creative arts have received ever-increasing attention in the United States. Today they are especially emphasized through the new uses to which they are being put in the occupational therapy programs of our Army and Navy hospitals. They also are being used more widely in recreational organizations throughout the United States than ever before. Many wounded veterans are engaged in what are known as "do-it-yourself" programs. They are provided with rooms and facilities for pursuing their particular hobbies. The American Red Cross has established an Arts and Skills Corps and is carrying out special programs in many hospitals.

Many veterans of the First World War, who because of wounds or shock were not able to go back to their accustomed work, finally found a handicraft occupation that was both healthful and remunerative. Men have learned to weave, whittle, work with wood and with metal, make pottery, and engage in other handicrafts adapted to their physical and mental needs, thus being enabled to supplement their incomes and in some instances to build up small rural industries.

The cooperative extension work of the United States Department of Agriculture and the State land-grant colleges has for more than 25 years encouraged the development of handicrafts and rural arts as a part of its live-at-home programs. During these years many rural people, including boys and girls enrolled in 4-H Clubs, have been trained in various handicrafts and have shaped into useful and beautiful articles for their homes and farms materials that would otherwise have been wasted.

These rural people have learned woodworking and forging, which have enabled them to construct and repair buildings and keep farm machinery in working order. In several States boys and men are making harness, bridles, and other equipment for horse-drawn vehicles. Girls are learning to sew, spin, weave, dye, and knit and to make rugs, draperies, floor coverings, and the like for their homes, as well as to make and repair clothing for themselves and their families.

Many extension workers, recognizing the value of this hand work, have for years used their vacation periods to attend at their own expense summer schools where handicrafts are taught, that they might be able in turn to teach the farm families whose members would be benefited thereby. In the United States Department of Agriculture, Mrs. Leonore H. Fuller, now retired, pioneered for many years in organizing rural-handicraft guilds and field projects, and encouraged rural-handicraft workers to organize cooperatives as well as to find other practical methods for disposal of their products. Thus extension workers have made their contribution to the growing rural-handicraft movement, which is reaching into every corner of our country.

When the Second World War interrupted the peaceful pursuits of our people, we were experiencing a

RURAL HANDICRAFTS, OLD AND NEW

On wall, the oldest dated quilt in the United States, made in West Virginia, then a part of Virginia, in 1795. Other objects: Present-day ironwork and table with tray and pottery (New Hampshire), chair and stool (Virginia), basket (Vermont), hearth broom (Kentucky), hooked rug on floor (Vermont), afghan on chair crocheted of hand-spun yarn, colored with vegetable dyes (Oregon).

Nation-wide rural-handicraft movement unprecedented in this century. In the Southern Appalachian States this movement was clearly defined and had become an important part of the economic, social, and educational life of many a community, especially in the Virginias, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, and Alabama. A similar movement was getting well under way in the New England States. New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont had developed programs supported by State appropriations. Several other States were planning handicraft programs.

Although the war interrupted these activities, it did not destroy them. It drew many rural people into military service and war industries, but many still remained at home who, because of age or infirmities, or for other reasons, continued making things with their hands to supply their own needs or to supplement the family cash income. As rural people continued to keep up their home industries, it became increasingly clear that the organizations that made the work possible were destined to play a new and important role in problems of rehabilitation.

As servicemen, some of them handicapped, return to their homes, these rural organizations are preparing to take up the work where the medical services, the Red Cross, and other agencies leave off. These organizations will encourage the returning serviceman to continue life in his own community by helping him to find work in the handicrafts that will contribute to his health and happiness, and yield him a financial return. They will help to provide teaching in special skills, supply materials needed to carry out various handicrafts, keep open present markets, and provide new outlets for the increasing number of handicrafts that are certain to develop.

Fortunately, just before our entrance into the war, the Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture had completed a study of the handicrafts of our rural areas—the most comprehensive survey of its kind ever made. This was possible because of the cooperation of the extension directors and the county agents in 47 States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The report of this study, in addition to giving extension workers necessary information for the proper organization of extension programs in rural handicraft, will be useful to others vitally interested in and affected by the growing rural-handicraft movement.

Part I of this publication deals with the place of handicrafts in rural life, and the country-wide growth of what is known as the rural-arts movement, especially the developments since the First World War. It gives some idea of the important place of the arts in rural life, their present economic values and their social, educational, therapeutic, and aesthetic values to producers and consumers; it also gives some idea of their cultural potentialities, with special reference to some outstanding achievements in this field. A few illustrations of the work of rural artists and craftsmen appear in this publication.

Part II consists of the report of the Nation-wide study of rural arts and handicrafts previously referred to, made by the Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. This report tells what is going on in different parts of the country; it gives the numbers engaged in the practice of handicrafts as reported by county agricultural agents and home demonstration agents. It lists the principal materials used, the sources of design, and the types of handicrafts yielding the largest cash income, and tells how the products are marketed, the types of cooperating organizations, and what the agents and country people feel are the greatest needs in promoting these rural arts.

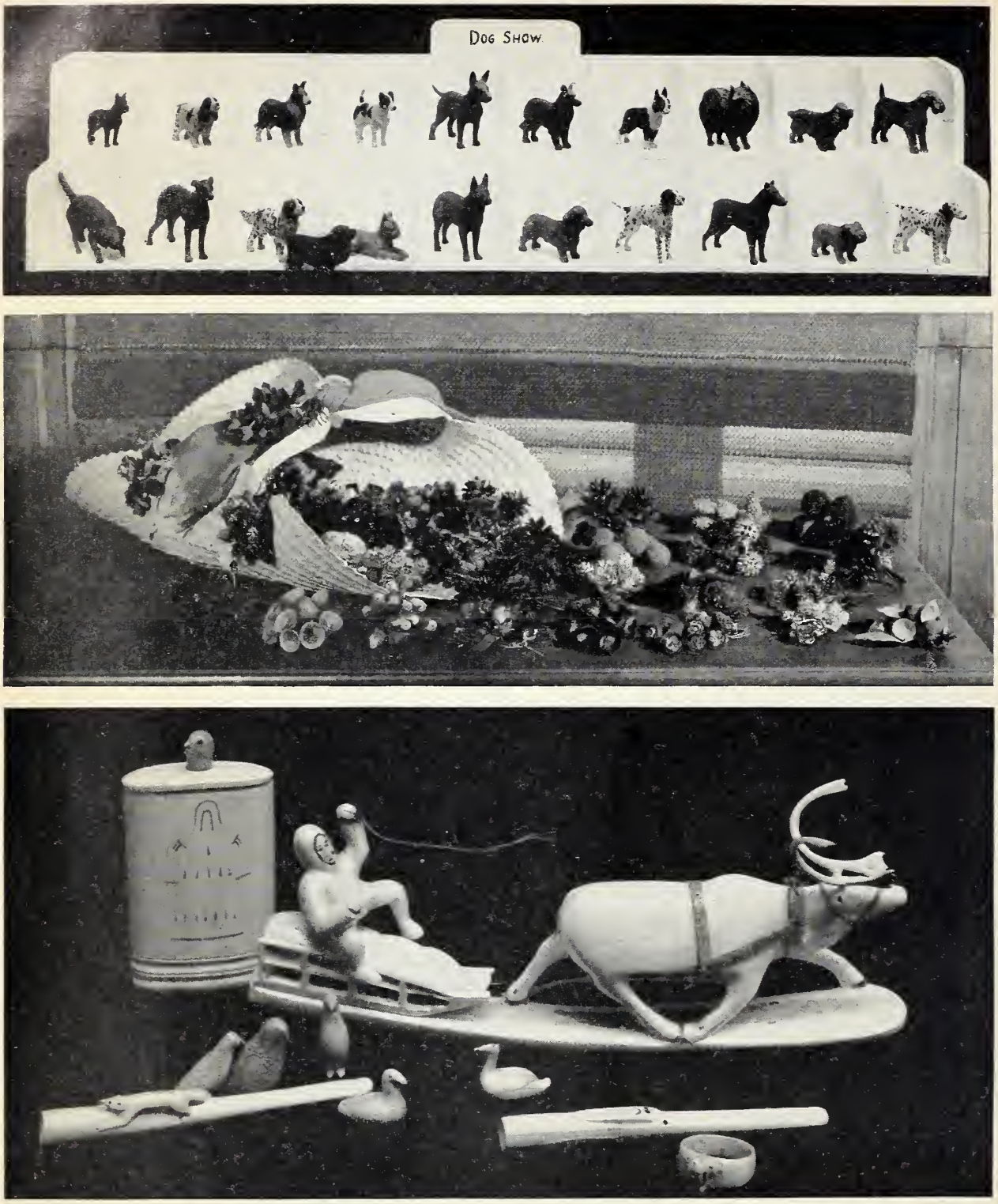
This report on handicrafts takes us into the heart of rural America. It reminds us again that American democracy is a way of life which has grown up around the hearth fire and the home and whose cradle was the early colonial community, where love of the soil, freedom of worship in one's own way, and mutual occupational interest combined to nurture an atmosphere of trust and confidence in one's neighbor. The lathe and the last, the spindle and the loom, were as much a part of this early way of life as were the hand-hewn plow and the village meeting house.

Today as mankind again stands on the threshold of a new way of life—a democratic way of life in an industrial age—we may look to our rural communities for traces of the old arts and skills that flourished in colonial days. To these pioneer arts have been added many others by the millions of immigrants who joined our population as it branched out into the four corners of the continent.

As we study the values in these arts and skills of a civilization that is passing we recognize indispensable qualities which we must recapture to strengthen and enrich the new civilization that is in the making.

M L Wilson

*Director of Extension Work.*




HANDICRAFTS IN WOOD, CORN HUSKS, AND IVORY

Dog Show (top) whittled by a craftsman of the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts, hat made of corn-husk braids and decorations of "wood pretties" (middle), carvings by Eskimos of Alaska from native walrus ivory (bottom).

# *Part I*

## THE PLACE OF HANDICRAFTS IN RURAL LIFE

By ALLEN EATON, *Director,*

*Department of Arts and Social Work, Russell Sage Foundation*

Since the first World War two extraordinary developments in the field of handicrafts have taken place in our country. The first was the growth of what we now call the rural-handicraft movement, which has extended into every part of our land. Rural people have always used their hands to make things for themselves, but since the First World War, and especially in the depression years, they have learned to make many new things, including a wide variety of handicrafts which they could sell and thus supplement their earnings. Though the movement is more pronounced in certain sections, as in the Southern Highlands and the New England States, it is spreading into every rural area.

The second important development of handicrafts in our country, with which we are concerned here, has come through their greatly increased use in the field of therapy. Although since the turn of the century we have had pioneers who realized the great curative value of work with the hands and found ways to apply the principle, yet the profession of occupational therapy, in which handicraft work is done under the direction of medical authority, has had its greatest growth since the First World War. So rapidly has the demand grown for thoroughly trained and qualified occupational therapeutists in civil life that before the Second World War came upon us demands for graduates of the schools of occupational therapy were greater than these schools could meet. Hence the increased demands during and since the war have made necessary the establishment of short courses in which competent craftsmen are intensively trained as aids for the therapeutists.

The American Red Cross is helping to meet this tremendous demand and, under the Occupational Therapy Branch of the Office of the Surgeon General, has been given the responsibility for using handicrafts in the field of recreation. For this purpose the Red Cross Arts and Skills Corps was organized. Thus the therapeutic-handicraft needs of returning servicemen will be met through the combined cooperative efforts of professional occupational therapeutists, serving under the supervision of the Government medical services, the American Red Cross, working in this field of recreation, also under Government supervision, and such supplemental help as can be found.

However, where the aforementioned agencies and their work leave off, the State and local organization concerned with handicrafts in their wider uses must work out ways to function in their own communities. The work of local organizations is for the long future, and anything that can be done to strengthen it must be done as early and as rapidly as possible.

The therapeutic use of handicrafts, vital as it is at all times, is but one aspect of the rural-handicraft movement. Although this publication has definite bearing on problems of rehabilitation, it is concerned also with the entire handicraft movement and all its implications.

Therefore, consideration of handicrafts and the rural arts in country life leads directly back to the basic place of rural life in our Nation. It is well to recall that until fairly recently we have been predominantly a rural nation. The situation, however, has changed and is still changing, until we now have become a great industrial country. These changes have been momentous in the life of the United States and in our influence throughout the world, but it is not conceivable that anything could take place that would dull our senses to the great role which agriculture and rural living have played in the past and must continue to play in further development. So, in considering the arts in relation to rural America, our thoughts go at once to the life and culture of which they are a part.

The life and culture of our country population should be the deep concern of all our people—not alone of those who live in the country, but of those



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CARDING WOOL BY HAND FOR SPINNING YARN

This Navaho woman of Arizona has washed the fleece of a black sheep, and with her carding combs is separating the fibers so that they can be spun on a hand spindle into yarn for weaving. Hand spinning is illustrated on page 7. (*Photograph by E. T. Nichols, Tucson, Ariz.*)

who live in the city as well. Many of our Presidents have been outspoken on the worth of our rural people and the great value of agriculture to the Republic, from George Washington,[1] who said,

> I know of no pursuit in which more real and important service can be rendered to any country, than by improving its agriculture. . .

to Franklin D. Roosevelt,[2] who said,

> In all our plans we are guided and will continue to be guided by the fundamental belief that the American farmer, living on his own land, remains our ideal of self-reliance and of spiritual balance, the source from which the reservoirs of the Nation's strength are constantly renewed.

President Theodore Roosevelt declared in his address, The Man Who Works With His Hands:[3]

> If there is one lesson taught by history it is that the permanent greatness of any State must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country population than upon anything else. No growth of cities, no growth of wealth, can make up for the loss in either the number or the character of the farming population. In the United States more than in almost any other country we should realize this and should prize our country population.

If we are really to prize our rural population, our appreciation must include this recognition that agriculture is not only a means of making a living but a way of life. It is a distinct way of life with values that constitute a unique, a strong, and in many ways a beautiful culture—a culture which it is a privilege as well as a duty for all of us wherever we may dwell, to encourage and help to conserve.

### *What Is Rural Art?*

The prizing of our country population leads directly to an appreciation of what we are calling the rural arts and admitting them into the great circle of aesthetic experience and achievement. The admission of rural work into the vital circle of the arts raises at once the question, What is art? To which I am convinced the soundest answer is, Art is just the best way of doing something that needs to be done. This is not a new concept; great artists have always had it. It has been the critics and those who think of art narrowly as limited to painting, and sometimes to only a specific style of painting, who have developed this point of view.

[1] Fitzpatrick, John C., *ed.* The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources 1745–1799. Vol. 33, p. 437. Washington, D. C., 1940.

[2] Presidential address given at Omaha, Nebr., October 10, 1936. (See New York Times, October 11, 1936, p. 44, column 2.)

[3] The address of President Theodore Roosevelt at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of the Founding of Agricultural Colleges in the United States, at Lansing, Mich., May 31, 1907.

No one has given a better definition of art than Robert Henri,[4] an American painter of distinction and a great teacher, who said:

> Art when really understood is the province of every human being. It is simply a question of doing things, anything well. It is not an outside extra thing. He does not have to be a painter or sculptor to be an artist; he can work in any medium; he simply has to find the gain in the work itself, not outside of it.

What then, do we mean by the rural arts or the arts of country people? Are they the same as the arts of city people, or are they different? True, much of our great heritage of beauty belongs to both city and country dweller; but there are certain things, many and beautiful, that belong particularly to the country—objects made of materials native to the country, designs and motifs growing out of the country, and things that, through design and material, express something of the locality from which they came, or record the reaction of the countryman to his environment.

[4] Henri, Robert. The art spirit . . . Ed. 5. New York. 1930. See p. 5.

MAKING YARN ON THE HAND SPINDLE

These Spanish-American countrywomen are spinning wool on hand spindles as it had been done on this continent for hundreds of years before the immigrant from Europe brought the spinning wheel to the Atlantic coast. Indians and Spanish-Americans in the Southwest still use the hand spindle. (*Photograph by Tad Nichols, Tucson, Ariz.*)

Some years ago when the members of a special committee of the American Country Life Association were struggling with the conviction that there is such a thing as rural art, but seemed unable to define it, they were shown a few photographs of beautiful wood piles in Denmark. Referring to the photographs, someone said: "It is not the thing that is done that makes an object a work of art, but the way in which it is done. It may be a painting on canvas, it may be a sculpture in bronze, or it may be a cathedral in stone; but it may also be a wood pile or a haystack."

This casual remark, including wood piles and haystacks in the circle of the arts, and the responses that came from it have perhaps more than any other thing, encouraged efforts made since then to get wider recognition for the rural arts of our country. We have begun to think of certain wood piles and haystacks not only as beautiful examples of rural work, but as symbols of all those things country people make with their hands, especially the objects we commonly term handicrafts.

We now recognize that the aesthetic experience can be as deep and as genuine to the one who uses soil, or wood, or grass to shape his best concept as to one who does the same with paint or marble; and that the spade, the ax, and the scythe are as much tools for artistic expression as are the brush and the chisel. Indeed, as experience with victory gardens has shown, one form of work which brings the greatest aesthetic experience is the making of a garden; for here are combined the world of nature and the world of art in perfect proportions.

### *Democracy of the Arts*

In these days much is said of the democracy of the arts, with emphasis on everyone's participation; but too often the aim of a crusade simmers down to a particular brand of art which the advocate insists that others enjoy, and if they do not happen to do this, something is wrong with them. This, of course, is neither the spirit of democracy nor of art. The essence of democracy is the right to choose, and the aesthetic experience, whether through enjoyment of the work of others, or through some creative expression of one's own, is a very personal experience. Hence freedom of choice in the arts, whether to do or to enjoy, is what will democratize them. Nothing else can. So each should be encouraged to choose for himself, and we should be far more concerned about the quality of the enjoyment than whether or not the choice happens to conform to our own taste.

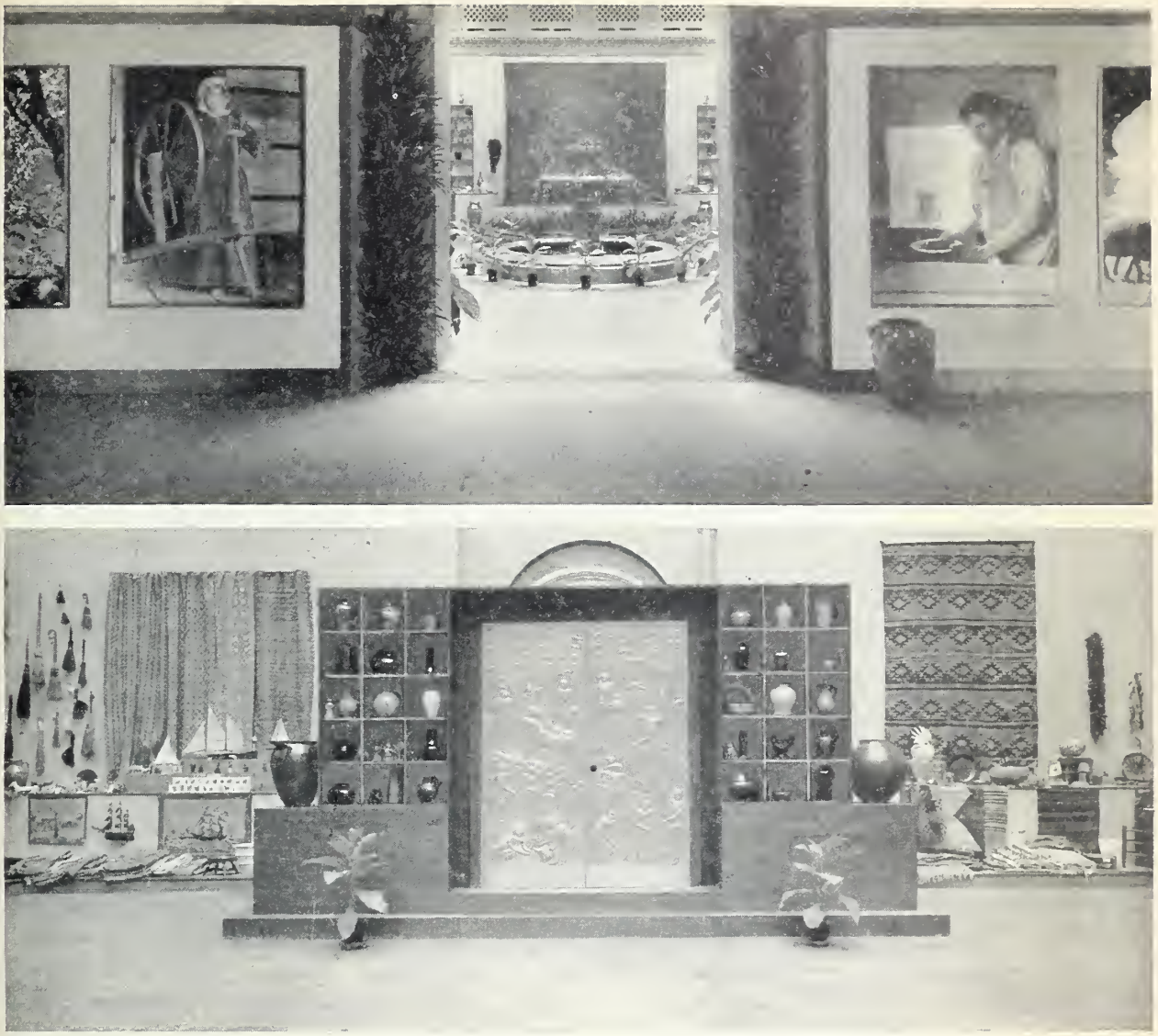
Most of our people will never experience the pleasure, the inspiration, or the solace of beauty in man-made things unless they get it from their home surroundings or from creative work they find close at hand. To include common objects in our definition of art, or, as the poet might say, in our catalog of lovely things, does not mean that we shall leave out the fine arts—the glorious achievements in painting, sculpture, and architecture. We shall include them all. But in addition to the finest examples of each, we shall make a place for the simple churches such as one sees in the villages of New England, log cabins like those in the Southern Highlands, barns in Pennsylvania, stone bridges, rail and picket fences, cottage flower and vegetable gardens, corn growing in the field and corn in the shock, orchards, vineyards, and many other well-made things including wood piles, haystacks, home-made furniture, hand-loom weavings, patchwork quilts, and even jellies and jams put into attractive containers.

When any object serving a useful purpose is made in an uncommon way—is wrought with imagination, good craftsmanship, and a sense of beauty—how can one fail to give it a place among the arts? For what is art but doing well something that needs to be done? By reserving a place for worthy examples of everyday things, we shall lose nothing from the great field of fine arts, and shall gain much in the enjoyment of beauty by discovering and encouraging it in the making and arranging of simple things.

### *The National Rural Arts Exhibition*

Perhaps the most important single event affecting the handicrafts of our country was the first national Rural Arts Exhibition. It was held in the Administration Building of the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., in the winter of 1937.

Every State, Territory, and possession of the United States was represented by handicrafts, photographs, or both, in this first national exhibition of the work of country people. The exhibition was a feature of the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Agriculture. It inaugurated the Nation-wide rural-arts movement. The attractive patio of the Administration Building, about 46 by 96 feet, was converted into a beautiful art gallery. The inner space was given over to handicrafts; the outer walls, about 275 linear feet of space, formed the background for one of the finest groups of enlarged photographs of American country scenes and country work ever brought together.



THE FIRST NATIONAL RURAL ARTS EXHIBITION

*Upper.*—Entrance to the first national Rural Arts Exhibition, held in November 1937, in the gallery especially constructed for the purpose in the patio of the Department of Agriculture Administration Building.

*Lower.*—At west end of exhibition, aluminum doors with rural motifs designed by Special Skills Section of the Farm Security Administration. Pottery cabinet containing ceramics from many States; various country handicrafts in background.

Three outstanding features characterized this exhibition: First, virtually all of the exhibits were contemporary; second, the arts of the American Indian were shown not as the artifacts of an odd people, but as the arts of part of our rural population; and third, the decorations used were plants of the farm or of the forest. The exhibition was thus rooted in the soil. These plants were mainly corn, wheat, cotton, and tobacco, all seeded in special pots the summer before and timed for the event. The corn plants were waist-high, the wheat was in the milk, the cotton in bloom and in the boll, and the tobacco in perfect foliage and just coming into blossom when the exhibition opened. The Forest Service supplied native evergreens, the principal decorations being branches of longleaf pine, holly, and evergreen cones from the North, South, and West. There were beautifully braided ears of yellow field corn from Connecticut, Indian corn of

ROADSIDE STAND FROM NEW YORK

**This roadside stand, shown at the national Rural Arts Exhibition, was designed by the Millbrook Garden Club of New York. The country products were arranged by members of the club, and the supply of green things was kept fresh during the exhibition by a member of the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering.**

many colors from New Mexico and Arizona, unusual fruits from Florida, and long strings of red peppers from the Southwest.

The first visitor to sign the register was Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace. At the end of the first day, so many people had attended that it was obvious the first national exhibition of the arts and handicrafts of our rural people would arouse widespread interest.

There were numerous expressions of popular enthusiasm. A Negro employee of the Department, who had brought his Sunday-school class in one morning at 8 o'clock, said: "I don't believe you folks know how much this exhibition means to all of us. Here are things which we can hope to do. In most art galleries the work is beyond our reach."

All during the exhibition period people continued to bring in things they or their neighbors had made, which they thought we might wish to use. As many as possible were included in the exhibit. Some of them were interesting, some beautiful, and all meant much to those who had made them.

Three old articles were exhibited: The great hooked rug which came out of New England about a century ago, one of the finest examples of American folk art ever shown; the oldest dated quilt in the United States, made in West Virginia, then Virginia, in 1795; and an ancient patchwork quilt from Kentucky made

entirely of mountain homespun cloth. These were included because hooked-rug making and quilting are among the country arts widely practiced today. With these exceptions, most of the objects had been made within the preceding 5 years and some within 5 days of the opening of the exhibition.

The hooked rug referred to, 14 feet by 14 feet and 3 inches, was lent by Mrs. Laura Hilliard Robinson, of Pittsburgh. It was the central feature of the exhibition, placed on the wall across the room directly in front of the entrance to the patio. It served as a glowing example of folk art with its entirely original design of plants, flowers, and birds against a bluish-black background. To the right, on the axis near the west end of the room, was a large cabinet built around a pair of aluminum doors on which were hammered agricultural motifs. The large expanse of silver-colored metal needed to be related to color, so a cabinet was designed with 30 compartments each a foot square which the Special Service Section of the Farm Security Administration built of gumwood. Then, to fit into these square spaces, pottery with glazes of many colors was gathered in the Piedmont section of North Carolina. This pottery, combined with pottery from other States, gave a fine accent to the west end of the gallery.

Balancing the pottery cabinet at the opposite or east end of the gallery was an attractive roadside stand designed by members of the Millbrook Garden Club of New York State, who came to Washington to dress it up. The exhibits were kept fresh by daily replacement by one of the men in the Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering. The roadside stand was unusually attractive in design and color. When artistically filled with fruits, flowers, eggs, grains, meats, jellies, jams, honey, beeswax, herbs, corn, peppers, and other farm products, it gave just the aesthetic rural note needed. Near the stand was placed an attractive farm-home pantry shown by the Texas Extension Service. A well-filled farm-home pantry with satisfying form and color balance, and with proper variety and food balance for the family's annual food supply, is often a work of art that lifts those who fill it to a higher plane of living and an appreciation of beauty in work well done.

The exhibits included examples of spinning, weaving, natural-dyed yarns and fabrics; rugs—hooked, woven, braided, and sewn; whittling and carving; pottery; glass; musical instruments; ship models; brooms; tin, copper, iron, pewter, and silver work, and enamel; semiprecious stones—cut, polished, and set; objects carved from soapstone; corn-husk articles; small furniture; leather work; food containers in clay and in wood; a few fine examples of canning and jelly making; and a considerable number of objects made from various rural materials such as feathers, grasses, seeds, and cones. All these were arranged, not in arbitrary divisions or geographically, but rather as one large, harmonious picture with articles placed wherever their form, color, or texture contributed most to the display. On the inside walls of the gallery were enlarged photographs of several craftsmen whose work was on exhibition.

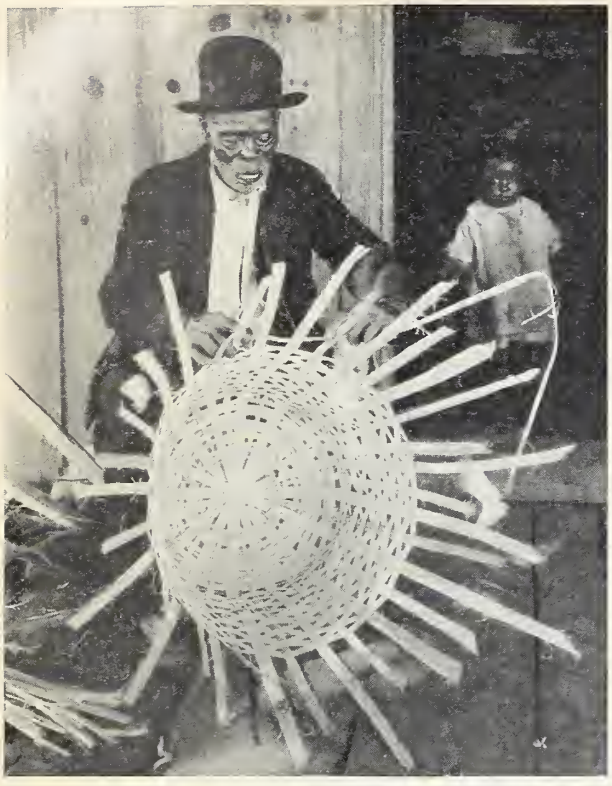
Much interest was focused on The Round-up, a miniature wood carving including 126 horses on the range, cowboy outfits, the cook wagon, and all camp equipment, whittled by a Montana cowboy; and the several sets of harness made by Negro farmers of Texas from the hides of their beef animals.

The Book of the Rural Arts Exhibition, designed by Frederic W. Goudy, whose workshop and type foundry at Marlboro-on-Hudson was in an ancient gristmill used for generations to grind the corn of the neighborhood of what is still a farming community, was too a product of rural life. The Deepdene [5] type in which the book was set had been designed and its fonts cast on the old farm where Frederic and Bertha Goudy had done some of the most notable work in the history of modern typography.

Attendance at the exhibition was more than double that expected, registered visitors averaging about 1,000 a day. But it was the quality rather than the quantity of visitors which was impressive. Those who came, many day after day, showed intense and pleasurable interest. President Franklin D. Roosevelt spent an evening at the exhibition and many of the handicraft objects engaged his attention.

This national exhibition was truly a cooperative project. It brought together so many examples of country handicrafts from such wide sources that it intensified interest in rural arts throughout the Nation. The exhibition had been made possible by the cooperation of Government and private agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration and the Russell Sage Foundation, the American Federation of Arts, the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, the League of New Hampshire Arts and Crafts, the Society of Connecticut Craftsmen, and hundreds of

[5] Deepdene type is used on the front cover of this publication. Garamont, a type also designed by Goudy, is used for the text.



WEAVING A BASKET FOR COTTON

**In the South many Negro farmers use white oak splints to make by hand large baskets for holding cotton.**

individuals. The Special Services Section of the Resettlement Division, Farm Security Administration, gave much assistance in gathering and installing exhibits and in the administration and servicing of the exhibition.[6]

Large numbers of people expressed the hope that the exhibition could be made an annual event, and many others felt that there should be a permanent rural-arts museum in Washington, D. C. Such a museum, it was pointed out, would have great popular interest and, in addition to reflecting the culture of our rural people, could be related to the life and work of all our States in such a way that it would be a growing thing, drawing from all parts of our country annually the best examples of their handicrafts and other examples of rural arts. In the production of these arts we are rich with our almost boundless variety of scene, climate, flora, fauna, and earth materials; but the greatest wealth of any nation is its people, and in our rural people we have potentialities that we are just now beginning to appreciate.

[6] In addition to the handicraft organizations mentioned above, there are others that provide leadership in solving such problems as setting standards, developing cooperative marketing outlets, and the like. Among these are The Vermont Arts and Crafts Service; the Maine Craft Guild; the Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen, and the American Craftsmen's Cooperative Council with its rural affiliates.

### *Cultural Potentialities in Our Population*

At least three major groups in our rural population give great artistic distinction to our Nation. First are the native Americans in the sense that they are the oldest inhabitants of our continent—the Indians, the development of whose arts and crafts marks one of the fine chapters of civilization.

There are the nearly 13 million Negroes, about one-tenth of our total population, many of whom have long lived by agriculture and who make up the majority of the farm workers in several Southern States. If they can be encouraged to express their own traditions and their personal preferences in handicrafts, they will, there is reason to believe, make a contribution to this phase of American culture as distinct as their gift to the music of our country.

And finally there is the largest group of the three, the immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the European homelands. Time has erased for most of us the ties that once joined our forebears to the Old World countries, but several million of our people still are conscious of these Old World traditions, and through their folkways, their creative expressions, and their daily work bring utility, color, interest, and charm to the things they make and the things they do.

These ways of work, these traditions in form and color and substance—products of house, kitchen, workshop, barn, field, and forest—give us a variety of expression in the arts of the people which, in the proportion that we encourage and conserve them will help to make our rural civilization outstanding in history. There is in the rural arts of our country a wide and beautiful segment of human expression which needs to be better known to all of us; and this segment is made up largely of what we call the handicrafts.

### *Values of Handicrafts*

If we are to encourage what may properly be called the rural-handicraft movement in America, we must not only enlarge our concept of art to include those objects which country people make better than they need be made for utility's sake alone, but we must also understand what the making of these objects means to those who produce them. In other words, we must know what the different values of handicrafts are. These values may be roughly termed economic, social,

BASKETS FROM MANY STATES

At the national Rural Arts Exhibition baskets were shown from 20 States. Many of them were made by Indians, who have achieved the highest standard of design and craftsmanship in the long history of basket making. Others were made by rural people in the Southern Highlands and the New England States. All baskets shown were made of native plant fibers.



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educational, aesthetic, and therapeutic. Any one or all of them may come from the practice of a single handicraft. Of these several values the economic usually comes first because through it the individual can make objects for his own use, which he might not be able to buy, or he may earn money with which to meet his needs by selling his products to others.

To many people, especially in the country, any work that brings them in touch with others has a social value. This is particularly so when the thing done or the service rendered is of a kind and quality which reflect the skill and ability of the individual in such a way that he is made to feel his work is worth while, that through it he receives recognition.

A Mexican potter carrying to market a heavy load of earthen pots on his back was met on the highway by a purchaser who offered him more money for his goods, in a lot, than he could hope to get by selling them one by one in the market. The potter refused the offer because it would have deprived him of the visiting which he so much enjoyed in the marketplace and the contacts with several customers.

This story of contacts suggests another about some child potters in North Carolina. These children belong to an old-time family of potters. The father makes crocks, pans, pots, and churns for the people of the mountains; the mother makes special figures of Madonnas and models portraits of her neighbors. The children, playing around the pottery, pinch up little animals from clay, pigs being their specialty. They sell some of their products at a roadside shop a few miles away, and invariably all the children go to the shop together. The shop is kept by a charming young woman who always enjoys the visits of the children and shows real appreciation of their artistic efforts.

Recently she found that when they brought their products to the shop they did not leave them unless she was there to receive them. A neighbor finally asked the small sister who seemed to be the spokesman for the children, "Why don't you leave your things at the shop? Do you think the lady won't pay for them?" The reticent little girl replied, "We like to watch her when she unwraps 'em."

The educational value of handicrafts has two interpretations, both of great significance: First, the advantage of learning by doing; second, the utilization of a handicraft as a basis for study.

An illustration of the value of handicrafts as a basis for adult education is the experience of a group of mountain weavers who decided they wanted to learn more about the work they did day by day. So they began by inquiring first how their grandparents in the "old timey" days had managed when they made practically all of their clothing and bedclothes from animal and vegetable fibers within their reach.

In a little while these unschooled women had gathered much of the textile history of the nearby mountain country, discovering old spinning wheels, weaving equipment, coverlet drafts, madder beds, and recipes for making colors from plants and minerals native to the region. Then they reached out to neighboring towns and wrote letters to friends in cities, asking for small exhibits of weavings that travelers had collected; and they also got some books on the subject of fibers.

After a year's study, they asked if there were any good pictures to be had showing spinning and weaving in other countries and other times. From a large collection, a selection of attractive color prints of paintings was purchased for less than $10. These portrayed the materials used, the processes of making threads and yarns, types of hand spindles, spinning wheels, and weaving looms from centuries ago until the present, and from many countries. Then these women acquired more books on textiles, one on tapestry weaving which led to their first art pilgrimage to a neighboring city especially to visit a famous mansion, where the keeper found them so interested and interesting that he took some of the fine tapestries off the wall that these women might examine them in detail and see just how they were made.

Although this group of students probably never traveled more than 10 to 15 miles from their homes, yet through study they journeyed around the world, learning much of history, literature, geography, archeology, science, art, and especially of home and family customs in many lands. In this educational process they established interests that will continue.

To give illustrations of the aesthetic values of handicrafts is unnecessary. Everyone who knows country people realizes the great satisfaction that comes to them from doing any work as well as they can do it, and especially the aesthetic experience that comes from creating any object of beauty. Nor does the great therapeutic value of work with the hands in helping to bring back to normal those who have suffered physical or mental setbacks require illustration. It is not necessary here to dwell on the steadily growing practice of encouraging subnormal people of certain types in the skillful use of their hands, a practice which has changed many helpless and dependent

THE NATIONAL RURAL ARTS EXHIBITION

*Upper.*—An exhibit of enlarged photographs of country scenes and country work extended around the four outer walls of the patio. For the entrance, see page 9.

*Lower.*—Round-up, by Hugh Haskins, a Montana cowboy. This wood carving represents an actual scene with 126 horses, 1 of which broke away and was never seen again.

charges into happy persons who can partly or entirely maintain themselves.

## *Economic Possibilities*

Mention of the economic value of handicrafts, especially to our country people, is particularly appropriate here because of recent experiments of great value in themselves and of much promise for the future. The illustrations are limited to two instances, one dealing with handicrafts in a community, the other with a Nation-wide experiment in handicrafts.

When the John C. Campbell Folk School was established near Brasstown, N. C., a few years ago, Mrs. Campbell, the director, noticed that the men and boys of the neighborhood were experts at whittling. She came to the conclusion that anyone who could cut a fence rail in two with his pocketknife in a few minutes or cover the benches at the country store with sharply incised mountain hieroglyphics without interrupting his own or anybody else's conversation, might, with direction, put that skill and energy to more constructive use. Some early experiments were made around the fireplace in the evening with a goose

and a mule as models. The young folks found the whittling to be interesting, and their first efforts were confined to farm animals and birds of the countryside. Then one of the boys decided to whittle out an old-time logging outfit, and soon there appeared the ox, sled, logs, maul, wedges, and ax—an authentic representation of a typical pioneer logging outfit. Many tried experiments, and now the line of whittling has great variety.

For several years whittling and carving at the folk school have been in progress; boys and girls, farm hands, and neighbors now take part. Many of the families in this community formerly had an annual cash income of less than $100 a year. Now the income of most of the families who whittle objects for sale has increased to from $150 to $350 a year, and in a few instances to $400 or $500 and more, with a growth in skill and taste quite beyond anyone's expectations. These mountain people have set a pattern in whittling which is spreading to many rural parts of our country.

### *The Hand-Made-Mattress Program*

A handicraft experiment of economic significance to the country as a whole was the hand-made mattress program, initiated by the United States Department of Agriculture and directed by the Extension Service in cooperation with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Agricultural Marketing Service.

In 1940, before this country knew that it would be drawn into the Second World War, we had a large surplus of cotton. It was suggested that if some of the surplus could be distributed to families on relief they could be taught to make mattresses for their own use.

In the mattress-making program, the Government made available to low-income families free cotton and ticking to be used in making mattresses for their own homes. The cotton was supplied from Government-held surplus stocks. The Extension Service in cooperation with other agencies developed the local organization and informed the public of the details of the program. Extension Service also received the applications, trained the community volunteer leaders, and supervised the actual making of high-quality mattresses. County Agricultural Adjustment Administration committees determined the eligibility of families desirous of taking part in the program. These AAA committees also requested the amount of cotton and ticking needed in the individual counties, received the material when it was shipped to the county by the Agricultural Marketing Service, and distributed it to the local organization set up by the Extension Service.

Through the efforts of county home demonstration agents and local cotton-mattress committees, well-equipped community work centers were established where farm families, usually the farmer and his wife, were given instruction in mattress making. Many of the farmers used cotton they had raised, and some of them bought their own bed ticking. But there were many families, sharecroppers and others, whose yearly income was less than $400, to whom the Government supplied both 50 pounds of cotton and 10 yards of ticking for each double-bed mattress made.

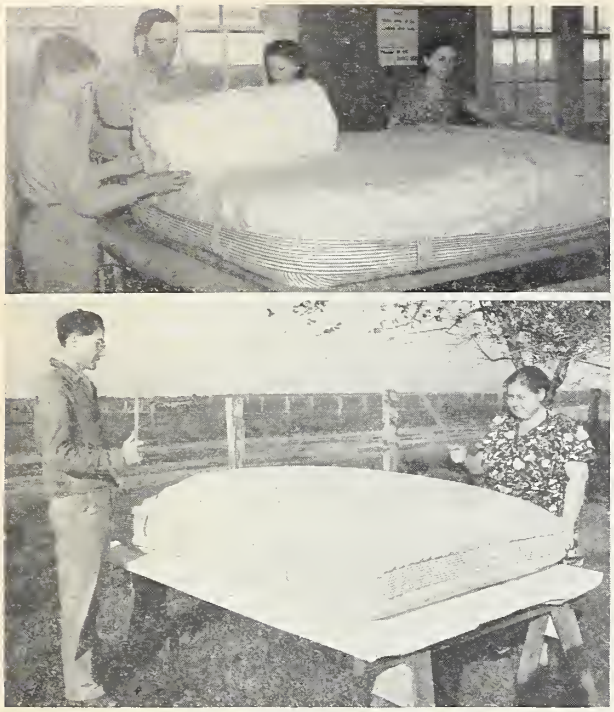
Through June 1942, 4,134,000 cotton mattresses and 1,371,000 cotton comforters had been made under the supervision of county home demonstration agents in organized community work centers. The mattress program was started in the South in February 1940 and expanded to include all States in September 1940. The comforter program was started in December 1940. Rural people who could not afford to buy these articles in the regular market, have through help from the Government, been able to provide with their own hands one of the great family needs and, as Grover B. Hill, then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, expressed it, "turn the farm surplus into a national blessing."

The mattress program has demonstrated how it is possible through the direction of the Extension Service, cooperating with an agency dealing in a surplus commodity, to help rural people help themselves through a country-wide handicraft program. This program has proved two very important points: First, that the Department of Agriculture is organized, with more than 6,100 county extension agents throughout the country to supervise the carrying-out of handicraft projects affecting the welfare of our rural population; and second, that the experience with the mattress program lays a practical foundation for an extension of this service to include a plan for the use of other surplus commodities, as well as of the abundance of local native materials.

What has been accomplished with raw cotton and bed ticking could be extended to other forms of cotton, including threads and yarns and certain kinds of cloth, especially the inexpensive but strong muslins and other plain weaves of which rural people could make wider use. Beautiful dresses for children, luncheon sets, table covers, and women's suits are made by students at the Berry Schools in Georgia from sugar,

HANDICRAFTS OF UNITED STATES INDIANS

Pottery storage jar, by Santa Clara Indians; papoose carrier and bridle, beadwork decorations, by Sioux; basket on wall, by Pimas. The rug is of Indian technique, but was hand-spun and woven by a Spanish-American farmer in Colorado.



HAND-MADE MATTRESSES FROM SURPLUS COTTON

A handicraft experiment of great economic significance was initiated by the Department of Agriculture in 1940 and directed by the Extension Service in cooperation with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The Government made available to low-income families free cotton and ticking to be used in making mattresses for their own homes. These photographs show the filling and finishing of mattresses made by Texas farm families.

seed, and fertilizer sacks, sent to them from their mountain homes.

The sacks are colored with home-made vegetable dyes; bits of thread, ribbon, and other material are used to add a note of color and decoration, and the total cost of the completed garments is from 1 to 15 cents each.

There is among country people a spreading interest in hand weaving for all household purposes. If cotton thread in several sizes could be made available at low cost, much more knitting and crocheting, as well as weaving, would be stimulated. When more cotton becomes available, it is hoped that a way will be found to supply it on terms that will enable our rural people, with their present skills and those yet to be learned, to convert the cotton into acceptable forms for their own use.

### *Value of Handicrafts to the Consumer*

In the foregoing observations, discussion has been confined largely to what handicrafts mean to those who practice them. A word is appropriate here about the interest handicrafts may hold for those who buy and use the products. The stream of hand-made objects flowing from rural communities to the towns and cities is of real importance to countless Americans who, coming into possession of these objects, have an opportunity to express their tastes and indulge their aesthetic preferences in ways never before within the reach of the average purchaser. And the handicraft movement is going far to democratize the arts through the conscious expression of beauty in work done in the forest, at the seaside, on the range, on the ranch, on the farm, and in the village.

### *Originality of Design*

Two features of rural handicrafts to which much attention is being given today are the encouragement of excellent craftsmanship and the development of original design. We are mindful of the fact that many good craftsmen are not interested directly in design. A large number aim to carry out in fine workmanship a design originated by someone else; and the fact must be recorded that our whole handicraft movement is in great need of close cooperation between good craftsmen and good designers. But it should be pointed out emphatically that many rural people have the ability to originate and develop good designs. These people should be encouraged for their own satisfaction in their designs for the contribution such designs will make to the distinction of the product.

All of us will agree that the country person who has never attended an art school or seen our priceless art collections will produce a very different thing, in working out any problem in design, from what he would produce if he had experienced art training or studied objects in art collections. We can go a step further and say that, in addition to doing a very different thing, he will often do a better thing by producing a work that is a truer reflection of his personality and his reaction to his problem, his materials, and his environment.

The statement has often been made that to encourage country people to follow their own ideas in designing will not yield the type of objects desired on the market. Experiments in original design have two important points in their favor. First, no one of us can say what the rest of us may like or want; therefore, until an object is offered no one can know how it will be liked or how it will sell. Second, people find it refreshing to discover designs that are original

RURAL BROOMS OF MANY KINDS

Hearth and scrubbing brooms and brushes home-made of native materials mainly in the Southern Highlands and in Florida. Seed corn in corner raised and braided by Martin Hidu, farmer (Connecticut), embroidered wall hanging (Delaware), table (New Hampshire), pottery (Southern Highlands), rug (Pennsylvania), baskets (Kentucky), hanging coverlet (South Carolina). (*Photograph from Rural Arts Exhibition, Washington, D. C., November 1937.*)

and individual. The rapidly growing interest in folk art, beginning in Europe and now spreading throughout the United States, gives increasing support to those who, untaught in formal schools but guided by the purpose the object is to serve and the material of which it is to be made, create in their own way the kind of objects that seem most suitable to them. And so with full recognition of the need for designing and styling many country products, much is to be gained by encouraging the rural craftsman to originate his own designs and give expression to his own preferences.

An even deeper reason for encouraging people to put into their work the best they have is that the worker through this effort will extract the greatest measure of satisfaction from any object he produces. Some day we shall judge every kind of work by two measurements: One, the product itself, as is done now; the other, the effect of the work on the producer. When that time comes, handicrafts will be given a much more important place in our plan of living than they now have, for unquestionably they possess values that are not generally recognized.

### *The Importance of the Rural-Arts Study*

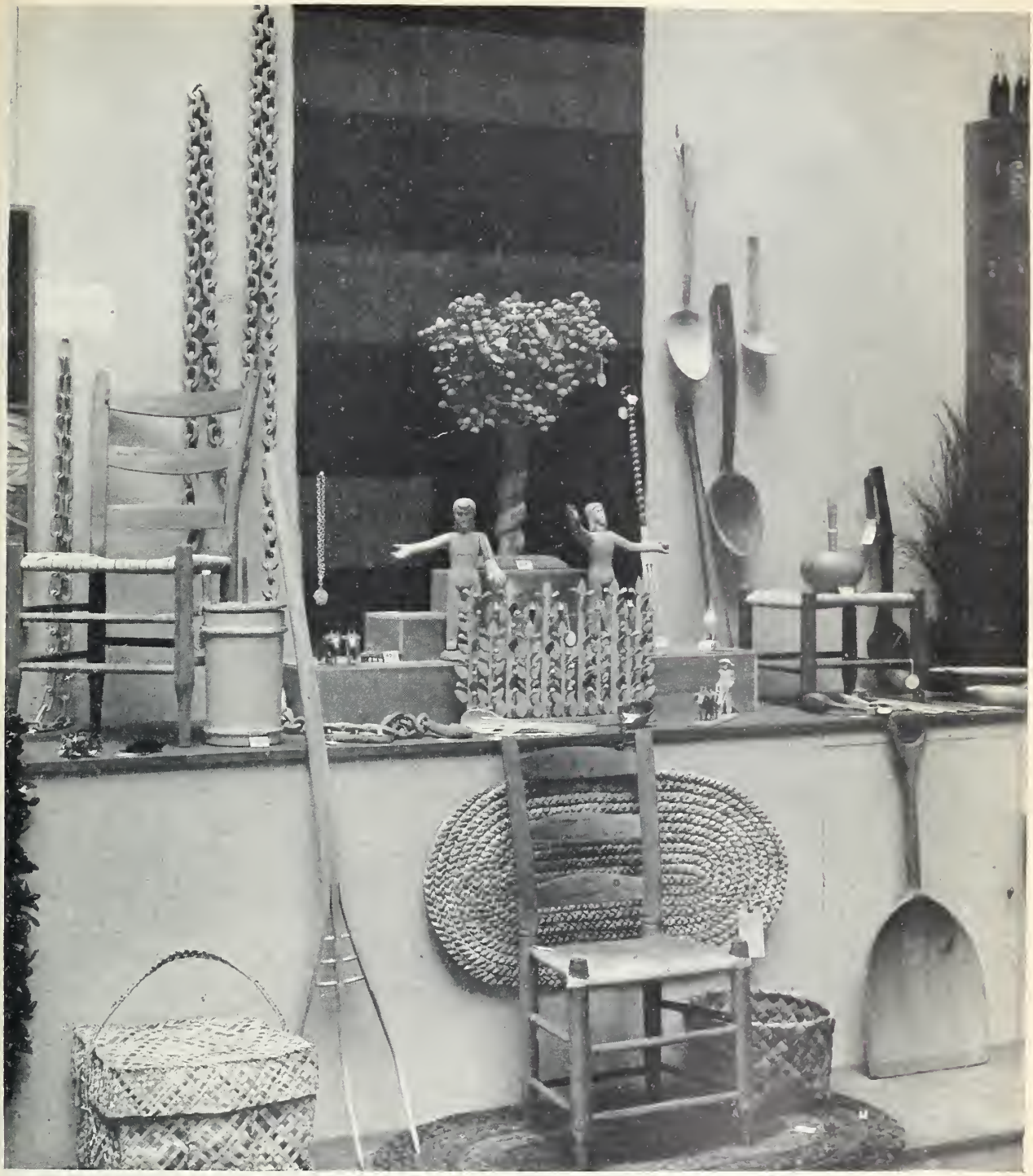
Before the study of handicrafts and other rural-art work (Part II of this publication) was made, little printed material or specific information was available on the number of persons engaged in this work throughout rural areas or on the variety of types of articles being produced. The methods through which craftsmen have developed their skills and promoted their arts were in many instances not clear, and such information as the use to which a majority of these objects was put, whether for home needs or for sale, was undetermined.

The objective in collecting wide information on rural handicrafts was twofold: First, acquisition of an extensive record of handicrafts work in all our rural areas touched by the Extension Service; and second, the hope that this record, like the Rural Arts Exhibition, would stimulate a more general interest in the rural-handicraft movement and in the practice of the arts as a part of the life and culture of the people of the United States. Bringing to the fore a large assemblage of basic facts concerning the home arts will no doubt arouse craftsmen who have not before realized the significance of their work to greater effort in the use of their constructive and artistic skills. In addition this body of information will impress our population generally with the importance of the home arts in country life. The full picture of the rural arts of our country, however, will emerge only through far wider and more intensive effort over a much longer period of observation than could be made in this first study.

The definition of rural arts in this study was extended beyond the making of objects of handicraft to include other expressions of artistic and ingenious work found in the home and the surrounding countryside, such as fine examples of home arrangement and decoration; the unique construction of buildings, fences, wood piles, haystacks, and the laying out of beautiful fields, orchards, or gardens. Thus, all types of rural creative expression were recognized as having a place in the composite picture of American rural arts.

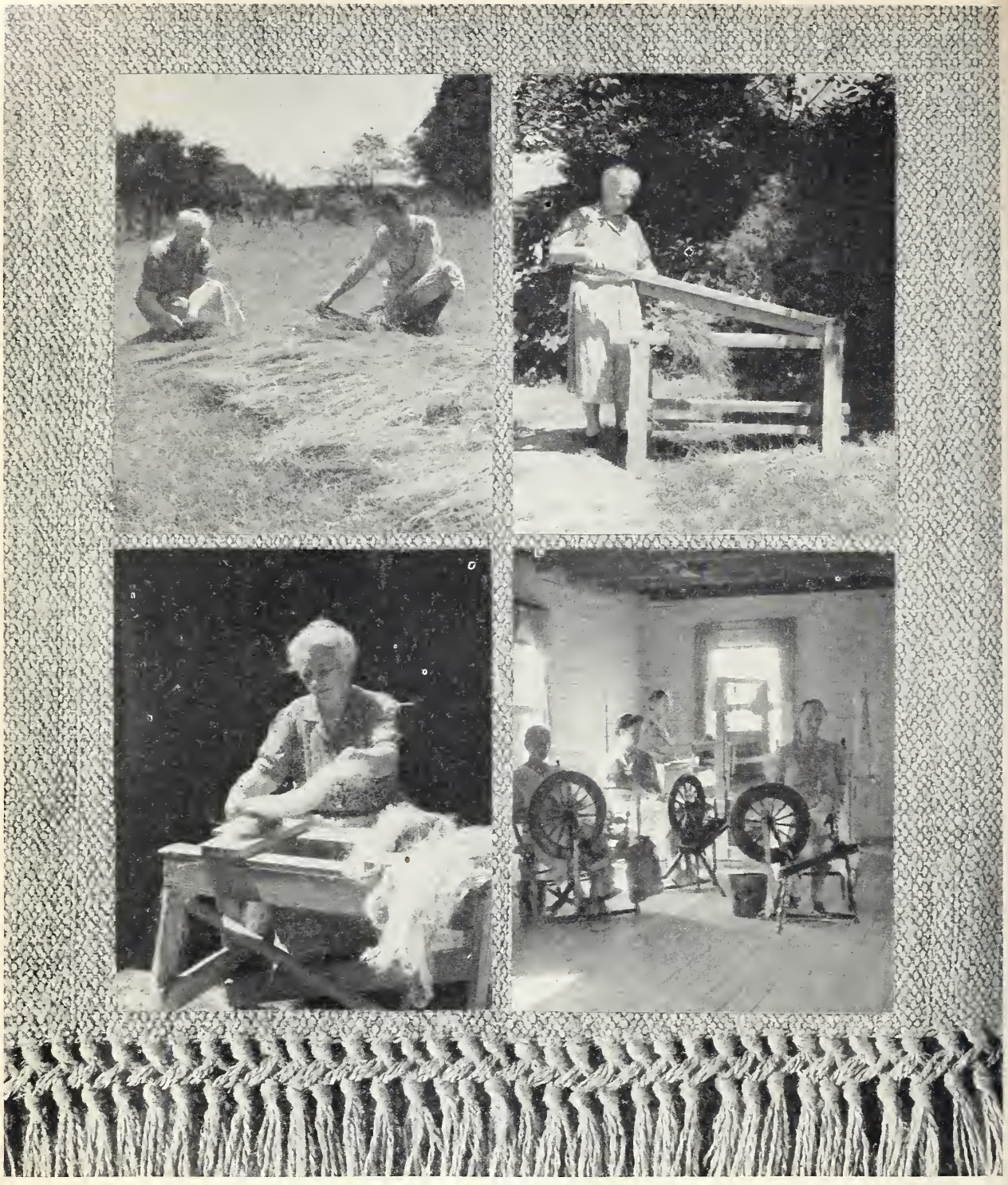
In the background of facts this study has revealed we shall begin to discover the many elements that make up the whole of what we call the rural arts: The total number of workers throughout our vast territory; the materials from which the objects are created; the sources of these materials; the various processes through which they are transformed into objects for use and enjoyment—carding, spinning, dyeing, weaving, quilting, patching, knitting, crocheting, whittling, carving, polishing, tempering, molding, chiseling, hammering, mixing, shaping, and decorating; the various reasons for creating these objects; the many needs they fill in rural life, in the home, on the farm, and in the community; origin of designs; the character of the products; the rewards or compensations from their making; the various ways through which they reach the market; and the human values and benefits derived from these types of work with the hands. This geographical and cultural record of rural life and work presents a mosaic rich in color, design, and workmanship.

The greatest value of this publication, however, is perhaps not so much what it reveals as having been accomplished, as what it points out as needing to be done and what the prospects are for going forward toward a higher achievement in the rural arts of America.



ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN

The wood carving of Adam and Eve in the Garden was done by a Spanish-American farmer in New Mexico. The chain, 20 feet long (at left) was whittled from one piece of wood by a Wisconsin farmer. Chair (center foreground), wood with calfskin seat made by a Texas farmer. Grain shovel (right foreground), carved out of ash tree by a Connecticut farmer. Pitchfork (left foreground), hand-made by Vermonter. Basket by chair, woven of birchbark by Finnish-American farm woman of Vermont. (*Photograph from Rural Arts Exhibition, Washington, D. C., November 1937.*)



PREPARING FLAX FOR WHEEL SPINNING AND WEAVING

At Parksley, Va., women on a WPA project raised flax, prepared it for spinning in several sizes of thread, dyed the thread, and wove many beautiful textiles. *Upper.*—Retting the flax plant in the field (left), breaking the fibers (right) *Lower.*—Hackling the fibers for spinning the thread (left), spinning by hand on foot-power wheels (right). Woman weaving by hand on loom, in background.

# *Part II*

## A COUNTRY-WIDE STUDY OF THE ARTS AND HANDICRAFTS OF OUR RURAL PEOPLE

By LUCINDA CRILE, *Extension Analyst,*
*Division of Field Studies and Training, Extension Service,*
*United States Department of Agriculture*

Interest in the work being done in handicraft and other rural arts by country people was stimulated by the Rural Arts Exhibition, described in this publication. Observing this interest, Henry A. Wallace, then Secretary of Agriculture, M. L. Wilson, at that time Under Secretary of Agriculture, and the Russell Sage Foundation sought more definite information on this work throughout the country.

It was proposed that a national inventory be made which would give a broad picture of the status of work in the rural arts, furnish a basis for a national program in this field, serve as a foundation for other studies of more specific phases of the work, and stimulate further interest in this activity. The county extension agents, who are employed in almost all of the agricultural counties of the Nation and whose work takes them into the homes of the rural people, were the group selected to furnish the information desired in this first comprehensive study of rural arts.

The Extension Service's Division of Field Studies and Training was called upon to collect, summarize, and interpret the data furnished by the county agents. The subject-matter content of the questionnaire to be used in the counties was left largely to Mr. Allen Eaton, of the Russell Sage Foundation and of the American Federation of Arts, who arranged the Rural Arts Exhibition, and to Miss Mary La Follette, of the United States Department of Agriculture, who assisted Mr. Eaton.

### *Scope of Study and Method of Collecting Data*

This study is based on an estimate of all handicraft and other art work done by country people in 2,969 counties served by county extension agents in 47 States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico in 1939. Only California and Alaska did not participate. The study is not limited to the work done in this field under the direction of the Extension Service. The data were furnished by the home demonstration agents, or by the agricultural agents in counties not having home demonstration agents.

A mail questionnaire was used. The questions asking for the various amounts referred to 1938 specifically. The others, which concerned the practices followed in carrying on the work, were not limited as to time.

Nineteen States and Hawaii made reports on all counties with extension agents. The remaining 28 States and Puerto Rico submitted representative samples, which were weighted to cover all counties with extension agents. Altogether a total of 1,309 counties sent in filled-out reports and data for 965 additional counties were included by weighting; 547 counties, or 19.4 percent, reported no rural-art work.

In some instances, agents who were serving in more than one county submitted combined reports for all counties covered by them. A few counties were divided geographically for the conduct of extension work, and separate reports were submitted for these parts of counties. In both cases such districts were counted as one county each in this study, since some of the data could not be converted satisfactorily to a county basis. Therefore, the term "counties," wherever it is used in connection with this study, actually means "counties and districts."

All questions involving amounts were marked "approximate" or "estimate," and it was understood that the rest of the report would also be based on the opinion of the agents, since any thorough investigation by them to obtain exact information was impossible. However, some of the agents made an effort

THE FARM—LINOLEUM BLOCK PRINT

**This decorative wall picture on cloth was made by the Folly Cove Designers near Rockport, Mass.**

in that direction, even though the letter of explanation which accompanied the questionnaire included the following statement:

> It is realized that you will not have exact data as to the character and amount of work being done by the different agencies promoting these activities, but it is believed you will know in a general way what has been accomplished in your respective counties, and your cooperation in filling out the enclosed questionnaire on that basis will be greatly appreciated.

Certain inconsistencies and omissions were noted in the data contained in some of the questionnaires, but it was not always practicable to correct them. The purpose of the study was to obtain a rough national inventory of the extent of the rural art and handicraft work being carried on in counties having the services of county extension agents, and the results are believed to fulfill that purpose satisfactorily. The data should be used only with these facts in mind.[7]

[7] The tables appearing in Part II summarize nationally the data obtained for individual States. Source tables, containing the detailed information by States are contained in a rural handicrafts supplement, U. S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service Circular 439. This circular has been made available to State and county extension workers. It can be consulted in State agricultural-college and experiment-station libraries.

### *Approximate Number of Persons Engaged in Handicraft and Other Rural Arts in 1938*

Over 1,500,000 country people were estimated to be doing some form of handicraft work in 1938. This total is unquestionably conservative since the agents did not in every instance estimate the number of persons engaged in rural arts, although they filled in other parts of the questionnaire indicating that work was being done. The average number of persons so engaged in counties reporting was over 750 (table 1). Over 50 percent of the total number of persons reported were women; over 25 percent, girls; 13 percent, boys; and 9 percent, men.

For the country as a whole, about 4 out of 5 counties reported handicraft work. This was true of 90 percent of the counties in the southern region as compared with 80 percent in the western, 78 percent in the central, and 49 percent in the eastern. However, in average number of persons engaged in the work in counties reporting individuals, the order by regions is: Eastern, 1,310; central, 869; southern, 636; and western, 599.

### *Purposes for Which the Work Has Been Promoted*

The "maker's own use" is by far the most important purpose for which handicraft products are made by rural people. "Leisure-time activities" is second, and "sale of products" is of least importance (table 2). The relative importance of the purposes from the standpoint of such factors as number of persons engaged in the work, volume of work, needs of the people, and income derived, was rated by using the numbers 1, 2, and 3. The ratings were evaluated by the method explained in the footnote to table 2 (p. 27), and the percentage of total importance thus credited to maker's own use is 47.2; to leisure-time activities, 32.4; and to sale, 20.4. Each of the 47 States,

TABLE 1.—*Approximate number of persons engaged in handicraft, 1938*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Item | Percentage of total counties reporting | Persons reported | Average per county reporting |
|---|---|---|---|
| Persons engaged in handicraft: | *Percent* | *Number* | *Number* |
| Men | 40.6 | 134,481 | 118 |
| Women | 67.0 | 772,111 | 409 |
| Boys | 44.2 | 200,983 | 161 |
| Girls | 59.2 | 394,827 | 236 |
| Total | [1] 70.6 | 1,502,402 | 754 |

[1] Not all counties estimated the number of individuals, but 80.6 percent filled out some part of the questionnaire, indicating that at least that many counties had done work in rural arts at some recent time. Not all parts of the questionnaire were limited to 1938.

PAINTING BY SELF-TAUGHT WISCONSIN RURAL GIRL

**The Homestead, painted by Lois Ireland at 15 years of age, is summed up in her personal information sheet filed with her entry in the annual rural-arts exhibition held by the College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin. Lois lives with her Scotch-German parents in the village of Waunakee; she is in school and has never received any training in art, but she writes, "I like to paint and spend all my spare time doing it." In 1939 the University held its first exhibition to encourage the rural cultural arts in Wisconsin. Thirty-two people sent in 62 pieces. The movement has discovered 238 people who do original work, mainly in painting. The exhibition is held annually during the Farm and Home Week of the college, and is one feature of a comprehensive program which includes also social recreation, rural drama, folk music, and regional literature.**

Hawaii, and Puerto Rico reported some work being done for each of the three purposes. The evaluated ratings for the three purposes differed but slightly in the four regions of the country.

### *Major Materials From Which Products Are Made*

In the order named, wood, cotton, wool, leather, metal, and clay are the major materials from which handicraft and other rural art products are made (table 3). More counties used wood, wool, and clay locally produced than shipped in, but the opposite was true of cotton, leather, and metal. Often a given material was obtained from both sources. Forty States and Puerto Rico were using all the six major materials. The South led in the percentage of total counties in the region using cotton and wood. The West led in percentage of counties using clay, leather, metal, and wool.

STITCHERY—MY FARM AND FAMILY

A farm woman of Delaware has pictured here in gay-colored embroidery a delightful record of rural home life, including members of the family, features of the farm, and domestic animals.

### *Principal Sources of Designs Used*

The principal sources of designs used by country people in making handicraft products are books and magazines, instructor, originality of the maker, and tradition in region, in the order named (table 4). In one-half of all the counties included in this study certain designs have been in use long enough or are sufficiently characteristic of the vicinity in which they are found to be considered traditional in the region. Also, enough interest has been taken in the work to enable 69 percent of the counties to report designs furnished by instructors. The four chief sources of designs are used by most of the counties doing any work of this nature. Evaluation of the ratings given to the various sources of designs in table 4 shows books or magazines and instructor to be almost twice as important as tradition in region, but not much more important than originality of maker.

TABLE 2.—*Purpose for which work has been promoted*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Item | Purpose | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Maker's own use | Sale | Leisure-time activities |
| Percentage of counties— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Reporting purpose | 74.5 | 61.2 | 70.9 |
| Rating purposes which rated them numerically: | | | |
| 1 | 77.3 | 8.3 | 15.4 |
| 2 | 18.4 | 14.6 | 60.8 |
| 3 | 2.2 | 63.0 | 17.9 |
| Relative importance of purposes as shown by the percentage relationship of evaluated ratings (total=100 percent) [1] | 47.2 | 20.4 | 32.4 |

[1] To determine the relative importance of the three purposes for which handicraft work has been promoted, each rating 1 was given the value of 3, each 2 the value of 2, and each 3 the value of 1. These evaluated ratings were added for each purpose and the totals are shown in their percentage relationship to the whole.

TABLE 3.—*Major materials from which products are made*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Material | Percentage of counties using material | Percentage of counties using material which is— | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Native to locality | Shipped in |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Wood | 63.0 | 73.9 | 31.8 |
| Cotton | 54.9 | 42.6 | 54.5 |
| Wool | 41.6 | 56.3 | 48.7 |
| Leather | 29.5 | 36.8 | 65.6 |
| Metal | 21.3 | 7.0 | 87.8 |
| Clay | 15.2 | 72.0 | 32.0 |
| Corn shucks | 3.3 | 98.6 | 2.3 |
| Pine needles | 2.9 | 92.6 | 7.4 |
| Reed | 2.6 | 11.8 | 84.9 |
| Miscellaneous native materials | 7.7 | 100.0 | x x |
| Other materials | 10.9 | 18.7 | 78.6 |

Comparison of reports from the four regions of the country shows that of counties doing rural-art work the West reported the highest percentage using designs original with maker, traditional in region, and furnished by instructor. The Central States reported the highest using books and magazines. The East reported the lowest percentage using these four sources.

### *Types of Handicraft and Other Rural Arts Produced and Those Yielding Largest Cash Income, 1938*

A detailed list of types of products considered as coming within the scope of this study was included in the questionnaire. This list served to define "handicraft and other rural arts" and insured consideration of virtually all types of articles by all agents. Only 5.5 percent of the total number of counties added other types of articles in the blank spaces provided for that purpose.

A PENNSYLVANIA POTTER

Isaac Stahl comes from a long line of Pennsylvania potters who carry on the old traditions popularly known as Pennsylvania Dutch. Although he makes many articles for his own use, there is a wide demand for these native products for home decoration. Mr. Stahl uses the old-fashioned kick wheel to shape his wares, which are decorated with traditional motifs.

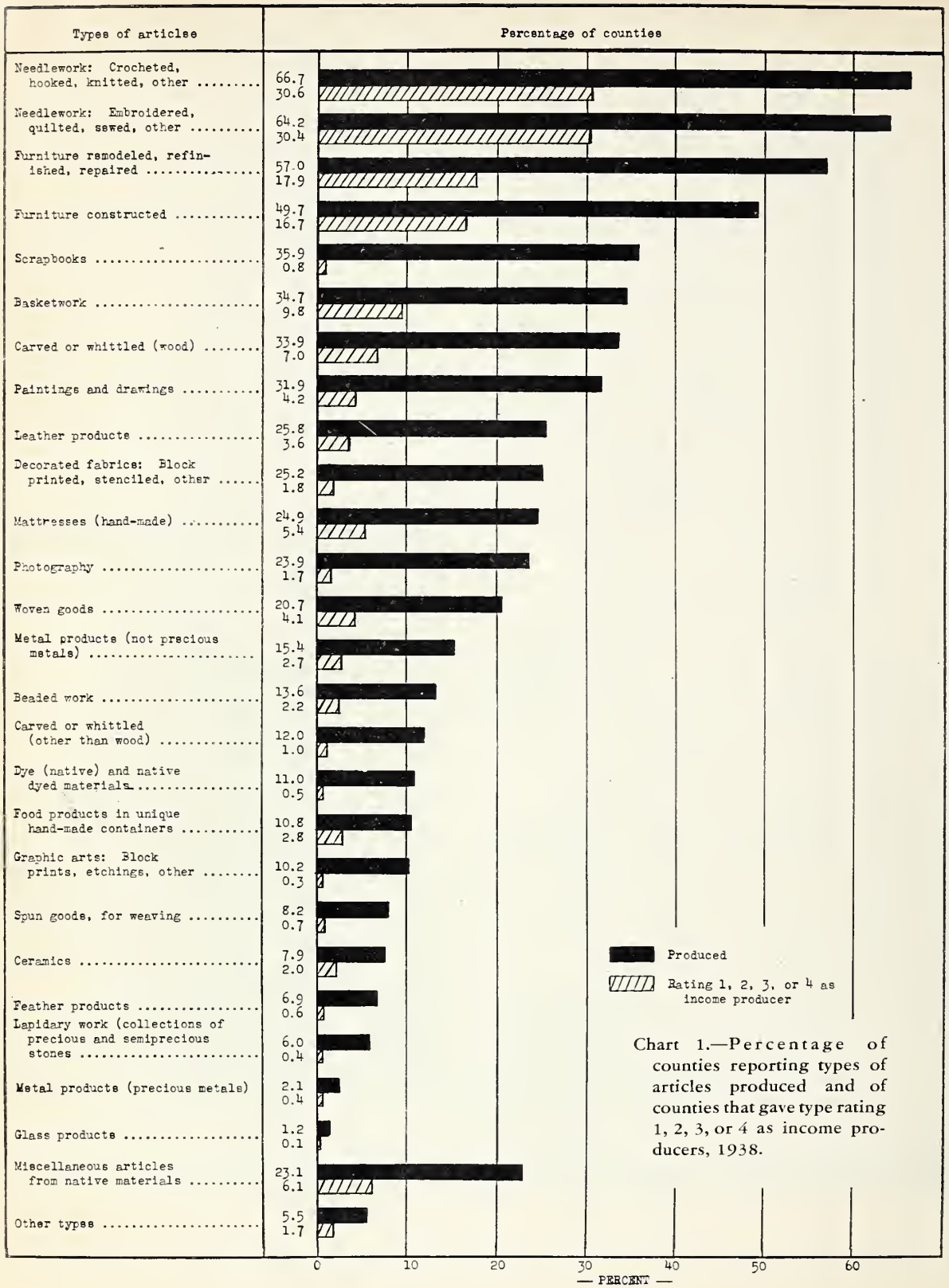

Types of articles
Percentage of counties
Needlework: Crocheted, hooked, knitted, other ..... 66.7 30.6
Needlework: Embroidered, quilted, sewed, other ..... 64.2 30.4
Furniture remodeled, refinished, repaired ..... 57.0 17.9
Furniture constructed ..... 49.7 16.7
Scrapbooks ..... 35.9 0.8
Basketwork ..... 34.7 9.8
Carved or whittled (wood) ..... 33.9 7.0
Paintings and drawings ..... 31.9 4.2
Leather products ..... 25.8 3.6
Decorated fabrics: Block printed, stenciled, other ..... 25.2 1.8
Mattresses (hand-made) ..... 24.9 5.4
Photography ..... 23.9 1.7
Woven goods ..... 20.7 4.1
Metal products (not precious metals) ..... 15.4 2.7
Beaded work ..... 13.6 2.2
Carved or whittled (other than wood) ..... 12.0 1.0
Dye (native) and native dyed materials ..... 11.0 0.5
Food products in unique hand-made containers ..... 10.8 2.8
Graphic arts: Block prints, etchings, other ..... 10.2 0.3
Spun goods, for weaving ..... 8.2 0.7
Ceramics ..... 7.9 2.0
Feather products ..... 6.9 0.6
Lapidary work (collections of precious and semiprecious stones ..... 6.0 0.4
Metal products (precious metals) 2.1 0.4
Glass products ..... 1.2 0.1
Miscellaneous articles from native materials ..... 23.1 6.1
Other types ..... 5.5 1.7
Produced
Rating 1, 2, 3, or 4 as income producer
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
— PERCENT —

Chart 1.—Percentage of counties reporting types of articles produced and of counties that gave type rating 1, 2, 3, or 4 as income producers, 1938.

TABLE 4.—*Principal sources of designs used*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Item | Sources | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Original with maker | Traditional in region | Supplied by instructor | From books or magazines | Other |
| Percentage of counties— | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Reporting source | 66.4 | 50.2 | 69.0 | 70.4 | 4.5 |
| With rural arts reporting source | 82.4 | 62.3 | 85.6 | 87.4 | 5.6 |
| Rating sources which rated them numerically: | | | | | |
| 1 | 15.8 | 13.2 | 37.0 | 32.5 | 1.4 |
| 2 | 25.0 | 9.2 | 26.2 | 33.9 | 1.5 |
| 3 | 35.6 | 16.8 | 16.9 | 19.0 | .8 |
| 4 | 15.9 | 34.8 | 12.2 | 8.4 | .8 |
| Relative importance of sources as shown by the percentage relationship of evaluated ratings (total=100 percent) [1] | 24.0 | 15.9 | 29.1 | 29.7 | 1.3 |

[1] For method of computation see footnote, table 2.

TABLE 5.—*Types of articles produced and relative importance as income producers, 1938*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Types of articles | Percentage of total number of counties reporting type produced | Articles completed | Average number of articles completed per county reporting numbers | Rating as income producer (four highest only) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Percentage of counties that rated type 1, 2, 3, or 4 | Evaluated ratings (total=100 percent) [1] |
| | *Percent* | *Number* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Basketwork | 34.7 | 656,334 | 842 | 9.8 | 5.8 |
| Beaded work | 13.6 | 65,171 | 219 | 2.2 | 1.4 |
| Carved or whittled work: | | | | | |
| Wood | 33.9 | 836,559 | 1,129 | 7.0 | 3.9 |
| Miscellaneous materials | 12.0 | 63,338 | 222 | 1.0 | .6 |
| Ceramics | 7.9 | 263,448 | 1,613 | 2.0 | 1.7 |
| Decorated fabrics | 25.2 | 374,048 | 641 | 1.8 | .8 |
| Dye (native) and native-dyed materials | 11.0 | 39,901 | 179 | .5 | .2 |
| Feather products | 6.9 | 620,400 | 3,947 | .6 | .4 |
| Food products in unique handmade containers | 10.8 | 62,001 | 256 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Furniture: | | | | | |
| Constructed | 49.7 | 337,236 | 298 | 16.7 | 11.0 |
| Remodeled, refinished, repaired | 57.0 | 371,127 | 285 | 17.9 | 10.7 |
| Glass products | 1.2 | 21,432 | 694 | .1 | .1 |
| Graphic arts: Block prints, etchings, other | 10.2 | 25,119 | 104 | .3 | .1 |
| Lapidary work (collections of precious and semiprecious stones) | 6.0 | 30,507 | 237 | .4 | .2 |
| Leather products | 25.8 | 107,082 | 177 | 3.6 | 2.3 |
| Mattresses (hand-made) | 24.9 | 96,572 | 158 | 5.4 | 3.8 |
| Metal work: | | | | | |
| Precious metals | 2.1 | 7,918 | 155 | .4 | .3 |
| Not precious | 15.4 | 44,839 | 133 | 2.7 | 1.3 |
| Needlework: | | | | | |
| Crocheted, hooked, knitted, other | 66.7 | 1,397,647 | 946 | 30.6 | 20.7 |
| Embroidered, quilted, sewed, other | 64.2 | 1,869,125 | 1,318 | 30.4 | 21.4 |
| Paintings and drawings | 31.9 | 89,293 | 128 | 4.2 | 2.2 |
| Photography | 23.9 | 650,984 | 1,426 | 1.7 | .7 |
| Scrapbooks | 35.9 | 136,913 | 166 | .8 | .3 |
| Spun goods, for weaving | 8.2 | 16,836 | 103 | .7 | .5 |
| Woven goods | 20.7 | 84,667 | 180 | 4.1 | 2.7 |
| Miscellaneous articles from native materials | 23.1 | 527,487 | 1,031 | 6.1 | 3.8 |
| Other types | 5.5 | 491,734 | 4,108 | 1.7 | 1.3 |

[1] For method of computation see footnote, table 2.

Needlework done with a large needle, such as crocheted, hooked, and knitted articles, was the type produced by the largest number of counties—about two-thirds of the total (table 5 and chart 1). Almost as many counties reported needlework done with a small needle, such as embroidered, quilted, and sewed articles. The two types of furniture work, remodeling and construction, were next in order and nearly as important. About one-third of the counties reported each of the following: Scrapbook work, basketwork, carved or whittled work (wood), and paintings and drawings. Approximately one-fourth of the counties reported the production of leather goods; decorated fabrics such as hand-block printed, stenciled, and tied-and-dyed work; hand-made mattresses; photography; and woven goods. Other types reported by 10 to 15 percent of the counties are, in descending order, metal products (not precious metals), beaded work, carved or whittled work (other than wood), native dyes and native dyed materials, food products

HOME-MADE HARNESS

These 2 sets of harness, selected from an exhibit of 50 sets, were made for use on their farms by Negro farmers in Texas who cured the hides from their own beef cattle, tanned the leather, and, except for metal parts and thread purchased, made all the rest of the harness.

DECORATED WOODEN PLATE IN ROSEMALING

**Rosemaling is a type of painted decoration commonly used in the Scandinavian countries. This plate was done by Per Lysne, a Wisconsin citizen born in Norway, who has decorated the interior of several homes. He also applies his colorful art to boxes, plates, and other wooden objects. The motto means "Smorgaasbordet is now set. Please help yourself."**

in unique hand-made containers, and graphic arts including block prints, etchings, and dry points.

The number of articles of the different types produced varies widely. Whether or not promotion of the production of certain types of articles for sale or other purposes would be desirable involves many factors not included in this study and is a subject for further research.

All States reported furniture remodeled, leather products, and needlework of both the large- and small-needle types. All but one State reported furniture constructed, paintings and drawings, and photog-

raphy. Only feather, glass, and precious-metal products, lapidary work, and mattresses were reported by fewer than 35 States. Glass products were reported by the lowest number of States, and in the lowest percentage of counties.

The four types of products reported as yielding the largest cash income were needlework (small-needle), needlework (large-needle), furniture constructed, and furniture remodeled. These were far above any other type. About 30 percent of all the counties with extension agents rated each of the two types of needlework 1, 2, 3, or 4 as income producers, and about 17 percent so rated each of the two types of furniture work (chart 1). Next came basketwork, carved or whittled work (wood), and hand-made mattresses, which were rated among the four highest by 10, 7, and 5 percent, respectively, of all the counties. No type of article listed on the questionnaire failed to be rated among the four highest by at least a few counties. Nearly half of the counties (44 percent) rated some types as income producers, and more than half (55 percent) of the counties with rural art work did so.

When all the ratings on income production given to the various types of products are evaluated and the sums for each type are shown in their relationship to 100 percent, the two types of needlework account for 42 percent of the total, the two types of furniture work for 22 percent more, or a total of nearly two-thirds for these products alone. Only one other type, basketwork, received a proportion of the total as high as 5 percent (chart 2).

The two types of needlework and the two types of furniture work were the four highest income producers in all regions except the West, where furniture remodeling was tenth and woven goods and paintings and drawings were tied for fourth place.

### *Exhibitions in Which the People of the Various Counties Participated in 1938*

Opportunity to further the production, sale, and appreciation of handicraft and other rural art work through exhibitions has been fairly extensive, as shown by the fact that two-thirds of all counties reported that handicraft exhibitions of various types in which the people of the county participated had been held in 1938 (table 6). This is 83 percent of the counties reporting handicraft work. About one-fourth of all counties reported such exhibitions at State and community fairs, and about 40 percent both at county fairs and extension meetings. Over half of the counties reported exhibitions in towns (2,500 population or under) less than 50 miles distant, one-fifth in cities less than 50 miles distant, and one-fifth in towns or cities over 50 miles distant.

The exhibitions at a distance were largely those at State fairs. Only one State reported less than three types of exhibitions, and 24 States, Hawaii, and

COUNTRY POTTERY AND COPPER PLATE

Copper plate against the wall (Connecticut), large pottery bowl and bean pot (New Hampshire), chickens (Jugtown pottery), woman's figure (Hilton pottery), pottery vase with handles (Piedmont section of North Carolina), and weaving on table (North Carolina).

HOME-MADE KILN FOR DRYING WOOD

This kiln was built by Archie Hunter in his home workshop near the Pee Dee River, S. C., where he makes furniture, especially chairs, from native white oak and water oak and seats them with braided corn husks. (*Photograph by Clemson Agricultural College, Clemson, S. C.*)

CHILDREN'S CORNER, EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY NEW ENGLAND HANDICRAFTS

Carved wood panel and stitchery wall hanging, by WPA art project (Connecticut), Alice in Wonderland enameled wooden figures (Vermont), hobbyhorse (New Hampshire), dolls and wooden animals (Massachusetts), cricket footstool (New Hampshire), lobsterman's boat (Maine), nursery rug designed and woven by Mable Holcomb (Vermont).

TABLE 6.—*Exhibitions of handicraft participated in, 1938*
[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Item | Type of exhibition | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Any | State fair | County fair | Community fair | Extension meetings | Other |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Counties reporting exhibitions | 66.7 | 25.0 | 42.3 | 28.5 | 40.4 | 6.9 |
| Counties reporting exhibitions in: | | | | | | |
| Towns under 50 miles distant | 55.5 | 6.2 | 34.3 | 24.4 | 33.2 | 3.9 |
| Cities under 50 miles | 19.5 | 5.3 | 10.1 | 5.3 | 7.2 | 1.2 |
| Towns or cities 50 miles or over | 20.7 | 16.6 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 4.2 | 1.5 |
| Average days all exhibitions were held per county reporting days | 9.3 | 7.0 | 3.9 | 3.2 | 4.9 | 5.7 |

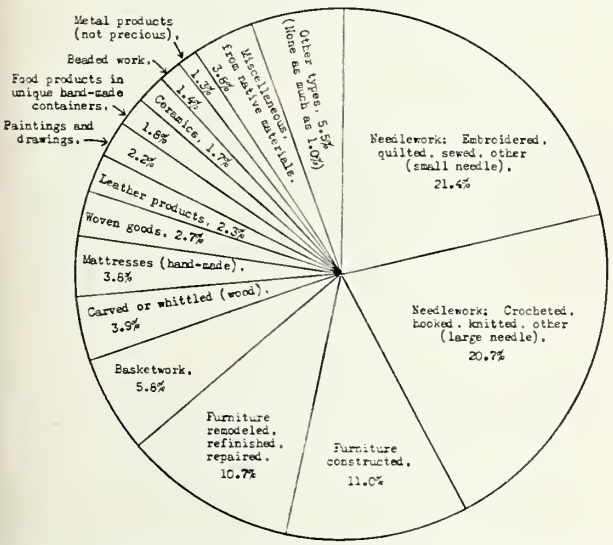

Needlework: Embroidered, quilted, sewed, other (small needle), 21.4%
Needlework: Crocheted, hooked, knitted, other (large needle), 20.7%
Furniture constructed, 11.0%
Furniture remodeled, refinished, repaired, 10.7%
Basketwork, 5.8%
Carved or whittled (wood), 3.9%
Mattresses (hand-made), 3.8%
Woven goods, 2.7%
Leather products, 2.3%
Paintings and drawings, 2.2%
Food products in unique hand-made containers, 1.8%
Metal products (not precious), 1.7%
Beaded work, 1.5%
Ceramics, 1.3%
Miscellaneous, from native materials, 3.6%
Other types, (None as much as 1.0%) 5.5%

**Chart 2.—Relative importance of types of articles as income producers in 1938. Evaluated ratings.**

Puerto Rico reported exhibitions in 75 percent or more of the counties. Among the 4 regions of the country, there is little difference in the percentage of counties that reported exhibitions.

### *Total Value and Marketing of Products*

The total estimated value of handicraft and other rural-art products made in 1938 was $6,320,000. Of this total, over $1,950,000 was the estimated value of products sold, and $4,370,000, or nearly two and one-fourth times as much, was the estimated value of products made for the maker's own use. A little less than half (46 percent) of the counties, or 57 percent of those with rural art work reported sales, and 54 percent of the counties reported on value of products made for the maker's own use (table 7). Many instances were noted where the amount of sales was not reported but the number of persons who sold products was given, or vice versa, or where neither was filled in when the distance to markets was checked. Likewise, a great many agents who reported products made for the maker's own use failed to estimate the value of such products. For this reason the percentages and total numbers in this section of the report may all be somewhat lower than was actually the case. The amount of sales per county reporting amount was a little over $1,800; the value of products made for the maker's own use per county reporting value was nearly $2,900.

About 28 percent of the counties were reported as selling products through the various types of organized markets and 32 percent through other types. However, the amount sold through the former per

TABLE 7.—*Types of markets through which products were sold in 1938, number of persons who sold products, and value of products sold*
[2,821 counties, weighted]

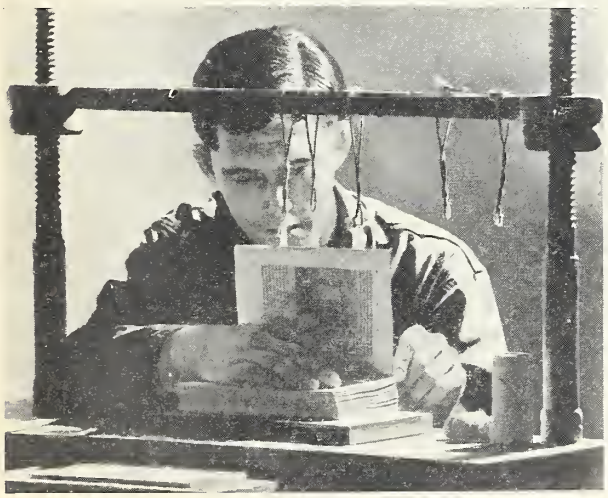
| Item | Type of market | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Organized | | | | | | | Not organized | | | |
| | All types | All organized | Home dem. club | Roadside | Tearooms | Cooperative | Special day | Christmas | Other | All not organized | At own door | House-to-house canvass | Other |
| Percentage of counties reporting sales | 45.7 | 28.2 | 6.9 | 7.9 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 6.4 | 8.0 | 7.0 | 32.2 | 25.4 | 11.4 | 9.6 |
| Average number of persons selling per county reporting persons | | | 16 | 32 | 37 | 47 | 72 | 63 | 64 | | 49 | 33 | 51 |
| Average amount of sales per county reporting amount (dollars) | 1,822 | 1,608 | 914 | 2,225 | 1,722 | 2,344 | 544 | 387 | 1,035 | 1,175 | 763 | 528 | 1,299 |
| Total number of persons reported as selling products | | | 2,638 | 4,866 | 1,839 | 3,587 | 9,806 | 10,190 | 10,394 | | 32,091 | 9,711 | 12,492 |
| Total amount of sales reported (dollars) | 1,957,675 | 1,055,043 | 139,635 | 318,676 | 80,936 | 189,368 | 76,736 | 66,426 | 183,266 | 902,632 | 462,119 | 137,022 | 303,491 |
| Percentage of counties reporting sales with reference to distance from market: | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Towns under 50 miles | | 19.4 | 4.0 | 6.2 | 2.2 | 1.3 | 5.2 | 6.4 | 4.2 | | | | |
| Cities under 50 miles | | 6.7 | 2.1 | 1.2 | .5 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 1.6 | | | | |
| Any, 50 miles or over | | 3.1 | .3 | .5 | .2 | 1.1 | .2 | .1 | 1.4 | | | | |

county reporting amount averaged about $1,600, as compared with about $1,200 for the latter. A little more than half of the total amount of sales reported was credited to organized markets.

A higher percentage of the total counties reported products sold at own door than through any other single type of market (25 percent). This was more than twice as high as house-to-house canvass which was second. The types of organized markets through which the highest percentage of counties sold products were, in the order named, Christmas, roadside, home demonstration club, and special day (6 to 8 percent). Markets in stores was written in for 1 percent of the counties, but no other type, organized or not organized, was mentioned that often in the blank spaces provided for that purpose in the questionnaire.

Over 32,000 country people were reported as selling handicraft products at the maker's own door in 1938. This is more than three times as many as the 10,190 reported for Christmas markets, the next highest type (table 7). Special-day markets and house-to-house canvass were next in order with nearly 10,000 persons each.

Maker's own door was the type of market through which the highest percentage of counties and the highest number of persons sold products, and through which the highest total amount of sales was reported (over $460,000). This was followed, in the order named, by roadside markets, for which the total sales reported amounted to nearly 70 percent as much; cooperatives, home demonstration club markets, and house-to-house canvass each with from about 30 to 40 percent as much; and the other types for which smaller amounts were reported. Cooperatives and roadside markets were the only two above the average for all types.



RED CROSS TEACHES MANY HANDICRAFTS

Many servicemen are having the opportunity through the Arts and Skills Corps of the American Red Cross to learn handicrafts of their own choice. Serviceman Jones, having chosen bookbinding, is sewing the sections of a favorite volume. (*Photographed for the American Red Cross by Mrs. J. W. Hazell, of Chevy Chase, Md.*)

Nineteen percent of the counties reported sales made through organized markets in towns under 50 miles distant and 7 percent in cities within that radius, as compared with only 3 percent which sold in such markets at a greater distance. This, coupled with the fact that a high percentage of counties sold products at own door and by house-to-house canvass, indicates that most of the handicraft products are sold locally or in what might be considered the vicinity in which they are produced.

The order of importance of factors considered in establishing prices of handicraft and other rural-art products is: Materials, labor, craftsmanship, design, and information from handicraft organizations (table 8). Only 13 percent of the counties with rural-art work reported that information from handicraft organizations had been considered, but 49 percent said such information is needed.

Only one State failed to report any sales. The southern region was the highest in the percentage of counties with rural arts selling through any organized markets and also through any markets not organized. The central region was the lowest for both types of market. The highest amount of sales for any State was $245,211. Six reported over $100,000 worth; 26, less than $25,000 worth; and 2 failed to report the amount. The southern region reported the highest amount of sales ($1,186,575) and the West the lowest ($170,519).

One State failed entirely to report on value of products made for the maker's own use in 1938, although that State reported work done recently for this purpose. The amounts for the other States ranged from $1,000 to $429,640. Eighteen States reported over $100,000 worth and 16 States and Hawaii, less than $25,000 worth. According to the reported value of products made for the maker's own use, the relative standing of the regions is central, southern, western, and eastern. The range is from $2,074,594 in the central region to $106,722 in the East. The amount for the South is nearly as high as that for the central region.

### *Types of Agencies and Organizations Assisting and Ways in Which the Department of Agriculture Could Give Further Assistance Most Effectively*

About one-half of the counties reported some kind of assistance with handicraft work from one or more types of organizations. State organizations had helped 40 percent of the counties; Federal organizations, 32 percent; and handicraft societies, 7 percent (table 9). Practically all States reported assistance from Federal and State organizations, but nine received no help from handicraft societies.

Instruction in the making of handicraft products is the type of help reported most frequently. Loan of teachers and publications each was reported by 35 percent of the counties, compared with 23 percent for loan of equipment and 13 percent for price information. Each of the four major types of assistance was reported as having been received from State organizations by a higher percentage of counties than from either Federal organizations or handicraft societies.

Nearly 3 out of 5 of the agents who filled out any part of the questionnaire suggested some way in which the United States Department of Agriculture could give further assistance to rural-art work in the field. One out of five suggested that bulletins or other publications be provided that would contain information on arts and handicrafts with simple, specific directions on construction, techniques, materials, and the like. This was mentioned most frequently (table 10). It was suggested by almost 1 out of 5 that trained instructors or specialists be provided. Provision of designs or patterns, demonstrational and illustrative material, and models was suggested by

TABLE 8.—*Factors considered in establishing prices on products*

[2,274 counties with rural-art work, weighted]

| Item | Percent | Item | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Counties with rural arts reporting factors: | | Counties with rural arts reporting price information needed from handicraft organizations | 48.9 |
| Any factor | 61.6 | | |
| Materials | 56.6 | | |
| Labor | 51.4 | | |
| Craftsmanship | 38.1 | | |
| Design | 32.6 | | |
| Information from handicraft organizations | 12.8 | | |
| Other | 2.9 | | |

TABLE 9.—*Types of agencies and organizations from which assistance has been received*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Agency or organization | Percentage of total counties reporting— | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Any assistance | Loan of teachers | Loan of equipment | Publications | Price information | Other assistance |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Any agency or organization | 51.9 | 35.3 | 23.0 | 34.8 | 13.3 | 13.3 |
| Federal organizations: | | | | | | |
| Any organization | 31.8 | 20.5 | 12.9 | 12.9 | 3.8 | 8.4 |
| Works Progress Administration | 21.2 | 15.4 | 9.2 | 7.2 | 3.3 | 3.6 |
| National Youth Administration | 17.6 | 10.0 | 6.8 | 5.2 | 1.5 | 4.8 |
| Office of Education | 6.2 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 4.5 | .3 | .4 |
| Office of Indian Affairs | 2.4 | 1.3 | .7 | 1.2 | .3 | .5 |
| Indian Arts and Crafts Board | 1.8 | .7 | .3 | 1.0 | .2 | .4 |
| Civilian Conservation Corps | 5.7 | 3.5 | 1.7 | 1.2 | .2 | 1.4 |
| Other | 1.0 | .4 | .2 | .7 | .3 | .2 |
| State organizations: | | | | | | |
| Any organization | 39.7 | 22.6 | 13.2 | 29.1 | 10.3 | 7.2 |
| Handicraft organization | 6.1 | 2.0 | 1.1 | 4.2 | 2.8 | .7 |
| University or college | 35.6 | 22.2 | 11.0 | 28.2 | 7.9 | 6.0 |
| Hospitals (occupational therapy) | 1.6 | .7 | .6 | .5 | .1 | .4 |
| Other | 1.4 | 1.2 | .8 | .8 | .3 | .4 |
| Handicraft societies: | | | | | | |
| Any society | 7.0 | 3.9 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 1.8 | 2.2 |
| League | .6 | .2 | .3 | .3 | .1 | .1 |
| Club | 4.7 | 3.0 | 1.6 | 2.0 | .7 | 1.3 |
| Cooperative | 1.4 | .7 | .4 | .8 | .3 | .5 |
| Other | 1.2 | .4 | .4 | .6 | .6 | .5 |

WOUNDED VETERAN FINDS DIVERSION IN HANDICRAFTS

At the Army Halloran General Hospital on Staten Island (N. Y.), the Red Cross arts and skills women asked Robert Hudson, waist gunner, wounded over Germany, if he would like to make wallets, dog tags, book covers, or embroidered maps, none of which seemed to meet his need. "You don't happen to have any old rags and a piece of burlap sacking?" he asked, explaining that his mother made nice rugs from rags. "I used to help. There's a pattern in my head I would like to make." The material was found, and this boy, paralyzed from the waist down, hooked a reproduction of his Eighth Air Force insignia. "Nobody is going to get this for a present," he said, "it's mine for keeps; I could not tell anyone just what that design means to me." (*Photograph, New York World-Telegram.*)

1 out of 10. The only other specific suggestion made by as many as 1 out of 20 was that markets be established or that help be given in establishing them. Other suggestions were made by fewer agents in the fields named as well as in the fields of promotion, standards, and organization.

### *Growth of Handicraft and Other Rural Arts in the Extension Program*

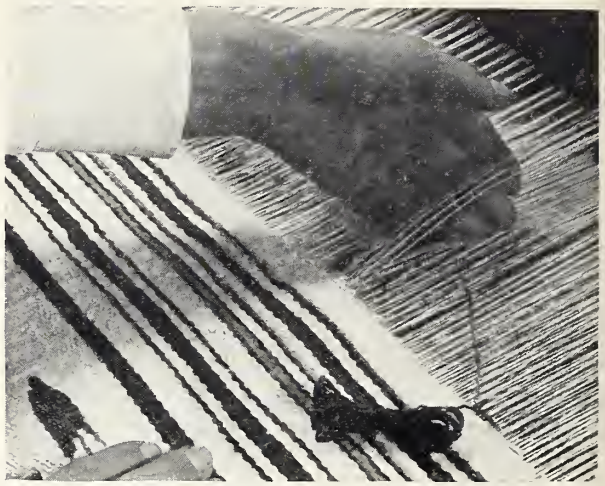
The two questions asking what year rural art work was first included in the extension program and what extension workers have promoted the work were the only ones in the questionnaire that pertained exclusively to the Extension Service.

Handicraft and other rural-art work was reported as having been included in the extension program at some time in about one-half of the counties in the sample (table 11). The number of counties including this work for the first time grew steadily from 1914 to 1939. In two of the five 5-year periods the number practically doubled over the preceding period. Two-fifths of all the counties that have ever had rural-art work in the program included it between 1935 and 1939. One or more extension workers have promoted handicraft and rural-art activities in two-thirds of the counties. Only one State has had no rural-art work in the extension program at any time. In 34 States one-half or more of the counties either have this work in the extension program at present or have had it at some previous time.

### *Greatest Needs in Promoting Rural-Art and Handicraft Activities*

In the order named, the greatest needs in promoting rural-art activities are improved craftsmanship, additional instructors, commercial markets, and better designs. These four, which were entered on the questionnaire, were rated or checked by 54 to 59 percent of all the counties. Only 5 percent wrote in any other needs, and only 68 percent reported any needs (table 12). The fact that 61 percent of the counties reported products made for sale (table 2) and only 46 percent reported sales (table 7) may be partly explained by the high percentage of counties reporting the need of markets and improved quality of products.

Almost one-third of the counties rating needs gave additional instructors or commercial markets rating 1. One-fourth gave this rating to improved craftsmanship, and one-eighth to better designs. Very little difference in the relative standing of the four principal needs is seen when all the ratings are evaluated and the total for each need is shown in its relationship to 100 percent. It appears that although more commercial markets should be developed, better products should be offered for sale by improving the craftsmanship and designs used.



HAND WEAVING FROM COLORADO

**This weaving is made from yarn with the age-old hand spindle still employed by Indians and Spanish-American craftsmen in the Southwest. For illustration of spindle used in this type of weaving, see page 7.**

A GROUP OF CAMPBELL FOLK SCHOOL WHITTLERS

**Members of the John C. Campbell Folk School group are the pioneer whittlers in the Southern Highlands. They have developed this native skill into one of the most important rural arts. Often, several members of the family carve, and their carvings of domestic animals, birds, and other figures are widely known.**

### *Examples of Ingenious and Artistic Expression Found in Home and Countryside*

Rural arts were defined, at the time of the exhibition in the Department of Agriculture, as including not only the small and portable objects usually referred to as handicrafts, but other artistic and ingenious work found in the home and the surrounding countryside. The questionnaire provided for citing examples of such work, and 43 percent of the counties in the sample responded. The type mentioned most frequently pertained to yards, grounds, and gardens, and was followed in order of importance by farm and home buildings, furniture and woodwork, home interiors, needlework, orchards and fields, graphic arts, rugs, spinning and weaving, and other types of varied nature.

HOMESPUN AND NATURAL-DYED YARN

**A Colorado ranchwoman, after having spun the fleece from her sheep into yarn, colors it with natural dyes and hangs it on the barbed-wire fence to dry and to test the colors.**

FARM WOMEN MAKE HOOKED RUGS

**Probably no folk art is more widely practiced in the United States today than hooked-rug making. One of the communities in the South to make an early success of rug hooking was Apison, Tenn. Here the women have worked cooperatively with the State extension service. Their hooking is uniformly good.**

### *Summary of Findings*

Handicraft and rural-art products were being made by country people in 81 percent of the counties in 1938. It was estimated that over 1,500,000 persons were engaged in this work, or an average of 750 per county reporting individuals.

The maker's own use is by far the most important purpose for which products are made, leisure-time activities is second, and sale of products is of least importance.

Wood, cotton, wool, leather, metal, and clay are the major materials from which products are made.

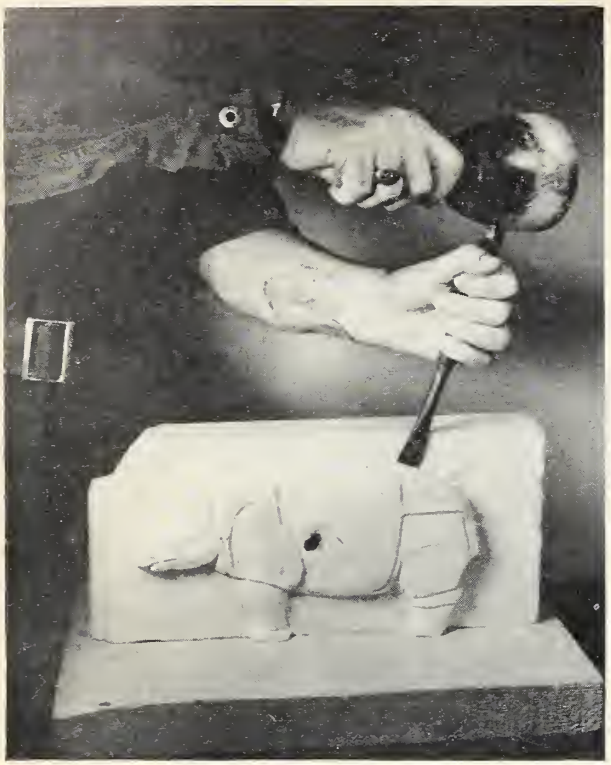
The principal sources of designs used by country people are books and magazines, instructor, originality of maker, and tradition in the region.

Two-thirds of the counties reported that handicraft exhibitions of various types in which the people of the county participated had been held in 1938.

Needlework of both the large- and small-needle types was reported as being produced by a higher percentage of counties than any other type of article. This was followed in the order named by furniture remodeled, furniture constructed, scrapbooks, basketwork, carved or whittled work (wood), paintings and drawings, leather work, decorated fabrics, mattresses, photography, woven goods, metal work (not precious metal), beaded work, carved or whittled work (other than wood), dye and native-dyed materials, food products in unique hand-made containers, graphic arts, and other work mentioned by less than 10 percent of the counties.

The four types of products yielding far higher cash income than any others were the two types of needlework and the two types of furniture work. Less than one-half of the counties rated any article as an income producer.

The total estimated value of handicraft products made for the maker's own use was over $4,370,000, and the estimated value of products sold was about $1,950,000 in 1938. These figures may be a little low,



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND GOVERNMENT SURGICAL SERVICE

**This serviceman, with a gunshot wound that injured muscles and paralyzed the compound ulnar nerve, is following the doctor's prescription for strengthening the arm by carving an original design in marble. By this exercise the injury is largely corrected and the patient acquires a new hand skill to his liking.**

since not all counties that indicated work done for these two purposes reported amounts. The value of products made for the maker's own use is about $2,900 per county reporting amount and for sale about $1,800.

Slightly less than half of the total counties reported sales of handicraft products in 1938. This was 57 percent of the counties doing work of this nature. Slightly more counties sold through markets that were not organized than through organized markets, but the average amount sold through the former was only $1,200, as compared with $1,600 for the latter. A little more than half of the total sales reported were credited to organized markets.

Maker's own door was the type of market through which the highest percentage of counties and the highest total number of individuals were reported as selling products and through which the highest total amount of sales was reported. Second place was held by house-to-house canvass for percentage of counties selling, by Christmas markets for total number of individuals selling, and by roadside markets for the highest total amount of sales reported. The data indicate that most of the handicraft products are sold locally or in what might be considered the vicinity in which they are produced.

The order of importance of factors considered in establishing prices of handicraft products is: Materials, labor, craftsmanship, design, and information from handicraft organizations.

TABLE 10.—*Assistance the United States Department of Agriculture could give to rural-art work in the field*

[1,309 counties with rural-art work, unweighted]

| Item | Percent |
|---|---|
| Counties doing rural-art work that reported suggestion: | |
| Any suggestion | 56.6 |
| Bulletins, model, exhibitions: | |
| Bulletins with simple directions | 20.6 |
| Models, designs, illustrations | 10.2 |
| Exhibitions with lecturer | 4.4 |
| Information on possible materials | 3.0 |
| Film strips, lantern slides | 1.2 |
| Other (less than 1 percent each) | 1.8 |
| Instruction: | |
| Trained instructors or specialists | 19.1 |
| Training for extension workers and other leaders | 2.8 |
| Training schools for workers | 1.3 |
| Instruction for club and home meetings | 2.8 |
| Conduct demonstrations | 1.2 |
| Instruction in design and method | 3.6 |
| Other | 1.0 |
| Markets: | |
| Establish or help to establish markets | 5.3 |
| Develop better or cooperative markets | 1.1 |
| Marketing suggestions, assistance | 3.2 |
| Market and price information | 3.0 |
| Promotion: | |
| Stimulate interest | 2.1 |
| Suggest types of articles | 2.0 |
| Encourage work in extension program | 2.0 |
| Other (less than 1 percent each) | 3.2 |
| Standards: | |
| Improve craftsmanship | 2.1 |
| Improve designs | 1.6 |
| Prepare standard sheets | 1.6 |
| Raise standard of products | 1.1 |
| Other | .1 |
| Organization (less than 1 percent each) | 2.3 |

TABLE 11.—*Year group in which rural-art work was first included in the extension program and extension workers who have promoted rural-art activities in the county*

[1,759 counties in sample, unweighted.]

| Item | Percentage of counties in sample reporting |
|---|---|
| | *Percent* |
| Year group in which handicraft work was first included in extension program: | |
| 1914–19 | 3.4 |
| 1920–24 | 6.9 |
| 1925–29 | 9.0 |
| 1930–34 | 10.7 |
| 1935–39 | 21.1 |
| Total | 51.2 |
| Extension workers who have promoted rural-art activities in the county: | |
| Any worker | 65.0 |
| Home demonstration agent or assistant agent | 51.4 |
| Agricultural agent or assistant agent | 30.4 |
| Boys' and girls' club agent | 15.8 |
| Negro woman agent | 7.4 |
| Negro man agent | 2.3 |
| State agricultural specialist | 14.4 |
| State home economics specialist | 38.9 |

ARTS AND SKILLS OF COWBOYS

**Whips, quirts, hackamores, bridle reins, and ropes made of horsehair and rawhide are among the handicrafts of the range in Nevada.**

About one-half of the counties reported some kind of assistance with handicraft work from various agencies. Loan of teachers, publications, loan of working equipment, and price information are the chief types reported. State universities and colleges, Works Progress Administration, and National Youth Administration were reported far more frequently than any other organizations. State organizations were reported more often than Federal organizations and handicraft societies less often than either. Rural-art work has been included in the extension program at some time in about one-half of the counties in the sample.

The provision of bulletins, trained instructors, designs and models, and the establishment of markets were suggested most frequently as ways in which the United States Department of Agriculture could give further assistance to rural-art work in the field.

TABLE 12.—*Greatest needs in promoting rural-art activities*

[2,821 counties, weighted]

| Item | Greatest needs | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Commercial markets | Better designs | Improved craftsmanship | Additional instructors | Other |
| | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* | *Percent* |
| Percentage of counties reporting | 54.9 | 53.9 | 59.1 | 56.5 | 5.1 |
| Percentage of counties rating needs which rated them: | | | | | |
| 1 | 30.6 | 12.8 | 24.8 | 31.0 | 4.0 |
| 2 | 16.4 | 23.2 | 34.7 | 14.8 | 1.5 |
| 3 | 15.4 | 28.2 | 22.6 | 18.0 | .5 |
| 4 | 21.3 | 20.7 | 7.9 | 21.2 | .8 |
| 5 | .5 | .3 | .1 | .2 | .8 |
| Relative importance of needs as shown by the percentage relationship of evaluated ratings (total=100 percent) [1] | 24.1 | 22.2 | 27.1 | 24.3 | 2.3 |

[1] For method of computation see footnote, table 2.

A GARDEN ON THE FARM

**The Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture has encouraged in its program of home improvement the making of attractive, small flower gardens. Here the family has brought to the farm home a variety of unusual plants and built a pool for water lilies.**

The greatest needs in promoting rural-art activities, according to the extension agents, are improved craftsmanship, additional instructors, commercial markets, and better designs.

The chief benefits derived from the practice of rural arts reported are that the work provides a constructive use of leisure time; supplements income; provides conveniences for the home; makes the home more attractive and comfortable; develops art appreciation, creative expression, and craftsmanship; provides personal satisfaction through creative work; and makes it possible for some families to have articles they could not afford to buy.